

WORKING TOWARDS DESISTANCE:  
CANADIAN PUBLIC'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEX OFFENDERS,  
SEX OFFENDER TREATMENT, AND POLICY

A Dissertation Submitted to the College of

Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

In the Department of Psychology

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

By

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## ABSTRACT

Understanding public attitudes towards sex offenders and public endorsement of sex offender policy is essential to the development of successful and workable policies that reduce sexual recidivism. The current research examined Canadian attitudes towards sex offenders, support for sex offender policies, and the relationship between attitudes, demographic variables, and policy endorsement. This research was completed via two studies: study 1 was a pilot project completed with undergraduate students ( $n = 333$ ) and study 2 included a representative sample of English speaking Canadians ( $n = 1008$ ). Attitudes were measured comprehensively by four scales: a feeling thermometer, the Attitudes Towards Treatment of Sex Offenders Scale, the Attitudes towards Sex Offenders and Criminal Justice scale, and a Social Distance Scale. Policies were measured using a newly developed Sex Offender Policy scale and were divided into Incapacitation/Control (IC) and Rehabilitation/Reintegration (RR) policies. Study 2 examined Canadian attitudes towards contact adult, contact child, and non-contact adult sex offenders. Comparisons among the three groups were completed in order to identify if attitudes and policy endorsement varied as a result of sex offender type.

Results indicated that a majority of the participants had negative feelings towards sex offenders, especially contact child offenders. Overall, Canadians had neutral beliefs regarding sex offenders and sex offender treatment. Canadians endorsed a majority of both rehabilitative and punitive policies, although endorsed significantly less IC policies for the non-contact adult offenders, compared with the other two types. Participants were in favor of RR policies, for example: providing therapy, stable housing and job assistance and Circles Of Support and Accountability, and also endorsed support for IC policies, for example: residence restrictions and public registration. Attitudes were also associated with policy endorsement. That is, more punitive attitudes were related to endorsement of more IC policies, and the endorsement of fewer RR policies; this relationship was also found in the reverse. A combination of measures of attitude as well as demographic variables was found to account for significant variance in both RR and IC policy endorsement.

This research suggests that Canadian attitudes are complex and Canadians endorse a variety of sex offender policies. These findings have implications for future policies and reintegration strategies and may encourage collaboration between researchers, policy makers, and the public.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not have come together, especially at this pace, without the incredible knowledge, help and support of Dr. Mark Olver. You are truly an exceptional supervisor, mentor and person, and it has been a sincere privilege to work with and learn from you. Thank you to my committee members: Dr. Steve Wormith, Professor Cindy Peternelj-Taylor and Dr. Melanie Morrison, and to my external examiner Dr. Kevin Nunes. I have appreciated your support as well as your diverse perspectives, knowledge and valuable feedback which helped improve the quality of my program of research.

Mama, Tata and Ioana- it is difficult to express my gratitude for all you have done in helping me reach this point. Thank you for your guidance, unwavering support, love and confidence, for the visits, countless phone calls, and for the warm welcomes and reunions home. Ioana and Andrew, special thanks for making a baby that looks like me. Neil, thank you for your endless patience, encouragement, help, and for keeping me laughing.

Thank you to my friends who made the distance feel inconsequential, for staying in touch, visiting, and planning trips around my schedule. Thank you also to the friends who made Saskatoon feel like another home, and who saw me through challenging moments of the program as well as helped me celebrate all of the mini milestones along the way.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the financial support I have received for my doctoral studies including the SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier Doctoral Scholarship (767-2013-1004) and the University of Saskatchewan's Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies' Graduate Student Research Award.

## DEDICATION

To my family and friends who are a constant source of strength, laughter and love. I am so lucky to have you.

In memory of my friend Clare Paterschuk (1987-2013). Thank you for helping me remember what matters most. Miss you friend.

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Table of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
ATS	Attitudes towards Sex Offenders (scale)
ATSOCJS	Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders and the Criminal Justice System (scale)
ATTSO	Attitudes Towards Treatment of Sex Offenders (scale)
AWA	Adam Walsh Act
CA	contact adult (sex offender)
CATSO	Community Attitudes towards Sex Offenders (scale)
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CC	contact child (sex offender)
CCC	Criminal Code of Canada
COSA	Circles of Support and Accountability
CSC	Correctional Service of Canada
DO	Dangerous Offender
EM	electronic monitoring
EFA	exploratory factor analysis
FT	Feeling Thermometer
GPS	Global Positioning Systems
GSS	General Social Survey
IC	Incapacitation/Control (policies)
LTO	Long Term Offender

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NCA	non-contact adult (sex offender)
NHS	National Household Survey
NIMBY	not in my backyard
NSOR	National Sex offender Registry
OSOR	Ontario Sex Offender Registry
PCA	Principal Components Analysis
RCT	randomized control trial
RNR	Risk Need Responsivity
RR	Rehabilitation/Reintegration (policies)
RSO	registered sex offender
SDS	Social Distance Scale
SGAL	Survey and Group Analysis Laboratory
SO	sex offender
SOIRA	Sex Offender Information Registration Act
SOP	Sex Offender Policy (scale)
SORN	sex offender registration and notification (legislation/policy)
SORs	sex offender registries

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*Note.* All abbreviations listed also have explanations included in text as they appear. List includes alphabetized abbreviations that occur more than once in the text.



## CHAPTER 1

### Working Towards Desistance: Canadian Public's Attitudes towards Sex Offenders, Sex Offender Treatment and Policy

#### **1.1 General Overview**

The perpetration of sexual violence has devastating consequences for victims and their families, including persistent psychological and emotional damage (Lutfe, Link, Litman, Rosen, & McKinlay, 2008), and its prevention is paramount to public safety. Sex offenders are more likely to serve jail time than other violent offenders (Kong, Johnson, Beattie, & Cardillo, 2003), but by law the majority of them will eventually return to the community. Given this reality, investigating what impacts and how to best support successful desistance, the process of ceasing offending and becoming a law-abiding citizen after incarceration (Laws & Ward, 2011), is in Canadian society's interests.

Integral to the process of desistance is successful community reintegration, which depends not only on the offender's desire and commitment, but also on the community's willingness to accept and interact with the offender. Indeed, researchers have been investigating factors associated with re-offending among sex offenders and have identified factors like a lack of social support, antisocial lifestyle, an inability to find stable housing and employment, and failure to comply with community supervision (Hanson & Harris, 1998) as important dynamic variables related to recidivism. These factors are influenced by community attitudes and public policies (Willis, Levenson, & Ward, 2010).

Public attitudes and reactions towards sex offenders play a role in the formation of sex offender policies (Sample & Kadleck, 2008). The public also plays a role in the effective implementation of these policies; especially policies related to managing sex offenders in the community. For example, if there exists programming which assists recently released sex offenders in finding appropriate and stable employment in the community, these programs rely on community members' willingness to actually hire a former sex offender into the available position. Therefore, it is important to investigate public attitudes towards these offenders and identify what the public perceives to be appropriate and acceptable policies and reintegration strategies that they would support, in order to promote successful sex offender reintegration. The current research program surveyed the Canadian public's attitudes towards sex offenders, sex

offender treatment, and sex offender policy, and assessed the relationship between these attitudes and support for particular policies.

Policy is a broad concept that encompasses different dimensions and in this study policy was defined as: a principle, course of action, program and/or law (Kerr & Seymour 2010, “Policy”, 2014). Policies are put into place by a government or related organization which, broadly speaking, are expressing the general will of the people. Policies are enacted in order to achieve a rational outcome and regulate economic and social interactions (Kerr & Seymour, 2010; “Policy”, 2014; Titmuss, 1974). Importantly, Titmuss (1974) notes that the term policy is action-oriented and that policy use is designed to affect change. Miljan (2012) indicated that policies are actions taken by the government and their agents in order to deal with problems of the country and its citizens. Although many definitions of policy exist, some similarities may be observed, including the concepts that policies are intended to be beneficial and to provide for the welfare of citizens. Furthermore, Kerr and Seymour (2010) recommend that the objective of public policy should be to create an environment that allows members of the public to maximize their own wellbeing, including supporting the principles of justice, security, and peace. In this study, the terms policy, public policy, social policy, and sex offender management/reintegration strategies are used interchangeably to refer to the above broad definition of policy.

The current research program focuses on adult male sex offenders. The term sex offender is broad and refers to a diverse group of offenders who have committed crimes that are sexual in nature as defined in the Sex Offender Information Registration Act (SOIRA) of the Criminal Code of Canada or CCC: “a crime is of a sexual nature if it consists of one of more acts that are either sexual in nature or committed with the intent to commit an act sexual in nature” (SOIRA, 2004). Offences considered eligible include (but are not exclusive to) contact sexual offences against adults and children, such as: sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, manufacturing child pornography with an identifiable victim, invitation to sexual touching, sexual interference, sexual exploitation, and incest; noncontact offences are also considered eligible, including: indecent behaviour, exhibitionism, voyeurism, obscene phone calls, and sexual harassment (Harris, Phenix, Hanson, & Thornton, 2003; Kong et al., 2003).

It is important to note that, while much of the research on sex offenders (in particular the research on sex offender attitudes) does not distinguish between different types of sex offenders, sex offenders are not a homogenous group and what constitutes a sexual offence is quite varied,

as is evident from the above definition. These offenders have diverse needs and vary from one another in meaningful ways. For instance, sex offenders do not all re-offend at equivalent rates, but rather recidivism varies depending on the type of sex offender (see below under Sexual Violence). Furthermore, researchers have found that attitudes towards sex offenders varied by sex offender type (Kernsmith, Craun, & Foster, 2009). Nonetheless, there is also important research in the existing literature that has distinguished broadly between sexual and non-sexual offenders.

Given the heterogeneity of sex offenders in general as well as the state of current literature, this research surveyed the public on attitudes towards three types of adult male sex offenders-adult contact offenders, child contact offenders, and adult non-contact offenders (defined below). These three sex offender types were selected as they represent important broad categories and were distinctive enough among one another in a manner that would be relatively easy to understand for lay people. It was not feasible to assess attitudes towards all types of sex offenders, and for example attitudes towards non-contact child offenders were not assessed in this study. This research also looked at overall attitudes towards sex offenders as a whole. For the sake of clarity, in the current document, unless noted or specified, when referring simply to sex offenders, the more inclusive definition presented previously will be used, in keeping with the literature discussed.

The following literature review will start by briefly summarizing the rates and effects of sexual crimes and providing an overview of risk factors associated with repeat sexual offending. Next, attitude theory, attitudes towards sex offenders, and the available literature related to changing attitudes towards sex offenders will be reviewed. Finally, a discussion of sex offender policy will be presented, including: how it is created, an overview of current policy and its efficacy, attitudes towards policy, and the policy impacts on sex offenders.

## **1.2 Sexual Violence**

### **1.2.1 Reporting Rates and Impact**

The vast majority of offenders convicted of sexual crimes are male (Corabian, Ospina, & Harstall, 2010), with an estimated 1-2% of males convicted of a sexual assault in their lifetime (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). The exact rate of sexual offending and sexual violence is hard to discern because rates of reporting for such offences are low.

Victimization studies indicate that sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes in Canada (Brennan & Dauvergne, 2011). According to the General Social Survey (GSS) conducted in 2009, 9 out of 10 sexual assaults were never reported to the authorities (Perreault & Brennan, 2010). In 2009, victimization rates (which include both police reported and unreported criminal acts) for violent offences (including sexual assault) were the highest in Western provinces, and sexual assault was the second most commonly reported form of violent victimization (Perreault & Brennan, 2010). According to the 2014 GSS, most incidents of victimization never came to the attention of police and sexual assault was again the least likely crime to be reported - only 5% of sexual assaults were reported. Although violent victimization rates in Canada have generally decreased over the past decade, sexual assault was the only crime for which victimization rates remained stable (Perreault, 2015). The majority (71%) of sexual assaults reported involved sexual touching. Forced sexual activity accounting for another 20%, and sexual assaults in which the victim was not able to consent because he or she was drugged, intoxicated, manipulated or forced in non-physical manner represented the final 9% of reported sexual assaults. In the 2014 GSS, participants were provided with a variety (over 20) of reasons for not reporting victimization incidents to the police, which included among others: fear or revenge by the offender, police wouldn't have considered the incident important enough, did not want to get the offender in trouble, and reporting to the police would bring shame and dishonor to the family. Nearly half of victims of sexual assault indicated that they did not report because they felt the incident was too minor, and 12% of sexual assault victims indicated they did not report because they did not want to bring shame to their family. This reason was likely related to the fact that many attackers are known to their victim (Perreault, 2015).

Sexual crimes are a serious cause for concern due to the nature of consequences for victims. Victims of sexual violence suffer from a host of physical and psychological injuries (Kong et al., 2003). These can range from physical pain and injuries to a plethora of psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, loss of self-esteem, relationship issues, shock, restricted affect, suicidal ideation, and social withdrawal (Campbell, 2008). Victims suffer effects that may interfere with many aspects of their lives, as a result of trying to cope with a very irregular occurrence that has caused incredible stress and anxiety. Many times, these issues further infiltrate the victims' social relationships. Additionally, families of victims experience secondary effects similar to what the victims themselves are

experiencing: trauma, disorientation, and a disruption in their social relationships (Edwards, Higgins, & Zmijewski, 2007). Due to these permeating negative effects, focusing on the reduction of sex offender re-offending is clearly an important undertaking.

### **1.2.2 Sexual Recidivism Rates**

When discussing rates of sex offender recidivism, or re-offending, it is imperative to point out that much variation exists within the literature (Hepburn & Griffin, 2004a). Due to the drastic rate of underreporting of sexual crimes, and the “dark figure” of unreported crime in general (Skogan, 1977), we can anticipate that, in fact, actual recidivism rates are higher than reported rates (Vess & Skelton, 2010). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that recidivism rates of sexual offenders vary based on: the type of sex offender (e.g., rapist of adults vs. child molester), the definition of recidivism operationalized for each research study (e.g., reconviction versus being charged with a new sexual offence), and judicial practices such as plea bargaining which may blur the rate of actual sexual re-offending (Vess & Skelton, 2010). Nonetheless, one longitudinal study comprised of 10 individual subsamples of over 4700 sexual offenders from across Canada, California, Washington, and England and Wales, found that 14%, 20%, and 24% of offenders were charged or convicted of another sexual crime over a follow-up period of 5, 10, and 15 years, respectively (Harris & Hanson, 2004). The authors found that rates of recidivism varied depending on the sub-group of sex offender and this remained consistent over all three follow-up periods. Specifically, over a five-year follow-up, boy-victim child molesters had the highest rate of recidivism at 23%. This rate was almost double the rate of recidivism of rapists (14%), over double the rate of girl-victim child molesters (9%), and almost four times the rate of recidivism of extended incest child molesters (6%) (Harris & Hanson, 2004). Rates of hands-off or noncontact sexual re-offending, such as exhibitionism (inappropriately exposing oneself in public), have been found to be higher than recidivism rates of contact sex offences. One study found that over a five to five and a half year follow-up, 35% of the sample was re-arrested for a new non-contact sexual offence, versus 14% and 11% of the sample which was re-arrested for extra and intrafamilial contact offences, respectively (Bartosh, Garby, Lewis, & Gray, 2003). A meta-analysis of 95 recidivism studies found an average sexual recidivism rate of 14% over a follow-up period of 5 to 6 years (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). It is also important to note that rates of sexual re-offending are lower than those of other violent and non-violent crimes.

### **1.2.3 Risk Factors and Intervention Targets**

In order to support offenders in ceasing further criminal activity, research has been conducted to identify factors that are associated with recidivism. Two broad categories of risk factors have been identified in the literature: static (or generally unchangeable factors) such as criminal history, and dynamic (or changeable) risk factors such as attitudes about crime and justice (Bonta, Law, & Hanson, 1998; Hanson & Harris, 1998). Factors associated with risk of general criminal re-offending include among others: younger age, pro-criminal attitudes, substance abuse, having criminal associates, and an unstable employment history (Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996). It has been argued, however, that sex offenders are different from other types of offenders, and that as a result these offenders have additional unique risk factors (Hanson & Bussière, 1998).

Some factors unique to sexual recidivism are static, such as victim characteristics (e.g., male victim), and are particular to certain offences, such as child molestation (Centre for Sex Offender Management, 2001). One study focusing on child molesters identified that static factors such as the number of previous victims, use of force in their offence, and score on a deviant sexual interest index, were found to be associated with offenders who recidivated (Barbaree & Marshall, 1988). Meta analytic studies have also found that sexual offence history (e.g., number and diversity of previous sexual offences, gender of previous victims, and having begun offending earlier in life) is a static risk factor associated with sexual recidivism (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004). A meta-analytic review found that in comparison to static factors, dynamic risk factors were equal or better at predicting recidivism (Gendreau et al., 1996). As static factors are largely unchangeable (unless one commits new offenses or ages appreciably) treatment providers and researchers have begun to focus on identifying and targeting dynamic factors associated with sexual recidivism (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004; Mann, Hanson, & Thornton, 2010).

Potentially changeable risk factors that have been found to be significantly associated with sexual recidivism include poor social supports, conflicts in romantic relationships, attitudes tolerant of sexual assault, and hostility (Hanson & Harris, 2000; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004). The presence of sexual deviancy and criminal lifestyles (characterized by rule violations, poor employment record, poor cooperation with supervision, and impulsive reckless behaviour) were also associated risk factors (Hanson & Harris, 2000). Sexual recidivism thus is generally

associated with 2 broad factors: 1) deviant sexual interests and 2) antisocial orientation (i.e., antisocial personality, history of rule violation, antisocial traits) (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004). A study comparing non-recidivating sexual offenders with recidivists on dynamic factors found that the social environment of non-recidivists included more positive influences than that of recidivists (Hanson & Harris, 1998). Hanson and Harris (1998) also found that sexual recidivists had more antisocial attitudes, engaged in more risky behaviour, were more likely to be unemployed, had more substance abuse problems, and overall, led more disordered and antisocial lifestyles compared with non-recidivists. Failure to complete treatment was also moderately associated with recidivism (Hanson & Bussière, 1998).

#### **1.2.4 Reintegration and Desistance**

Offenders, once released from prison or assigned community sentences, are faced with the opportunity to either reoffend or desist from criminal activity. For the purposes of this review the definition of desistance is a process of “cessation from criminal behaviour” (Kruttschnitt, Uggen, & Shelton, 2000, p. 62) and becoming a productive member of society (Laws & Ward, 2011). Desistance theory states that all offenders are foremost human beings and once they have completed their time in jail, or are being successfully supervised in the community, they have the right to live their lives just as all other citizens (Willis et al., 2010). Part of achieving desistance is the ability and opportunity to successfully reintegrate back into the community upon release.

Given that 60% of convicted sex offenders are being supervised in the community according to estimates (Greenfeld, 1997), it is important to look at dynamic factors that impact offenders’ ability to successfully desist in the community. Previous research suggests that, if offenders who are released are provided with the opportunity to find stable housing, employment, positive relationships, and other prosocial supports, they are more likely to desist from sexual offending (Hanson & Harris, 2000; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004; 2005; Hepburn & Griffin, 2004b; Willis & Grace, 2009; Willis et al., 2010). Therefore, any barriers between offenders and these community-based factors represent significant challenges to reintegration. Willis and colleagues (2010) stated that, “effective treatment, re-entry, and reintegration of sex offenders partially hinges on the way they are regarded by mental health professionals and members of the public” (p. 547). Positive relationships, available housing, educational opportunities, and stable jobs will not become a reality for sex offenders until there

are accepting attitudes towards them in the community (Willis et al., 2010), and until then, public attitudes and response to sex offenders may limit these offenders' ability to desist from future offending (Willis et al., 2013).

The implementation of reintegration strategies that support effective re-entry of sex offenders are not only impacted by the offender's willingness to engage in them but by the public's interest and attitudes in supporting and participating in these programs. Attitudes are related to how one behaves (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Thus, negative public attitudes have the potential to negatively impact an offender's ability to successfully reintegrate, as they will influence the communities willingness to engage in these programs/policies. It is relevant now to turn to the broader research on attitudes.

### **1.3 Attitudes and Related Concepts**

Before delving into the literature related to particular attitudes towards sex offenders, a general overview of the definition of attitudes and associated terms, as well as the literature available regarding the relationship between attitudes and behaviour, is warranted.

#### **1.3.1 Attitudes**

The literature on attitudes is extensive and varied and there is a lot of theoretical diversity relevant to this phenomenon (Albarracin, Johnson & Zanna, 2005; Oskamp & Shultz, 2005). Perhaps one of the most contemporary definitions of attitudes is provided by Eagly and Chaiken (1993) who indicated that an attitude is a psychological tendency, an internal state inferred from observable responses, expressed as a summary evaluation of some degree of favor or disfavor towards a particular entity. An attitude entity can be anything held in mind by the individual; commonly studied attitude objects include individuals, behaviours, social groups, and social policies. Social or political attitudes are those with implications for governmental policy or relations between social groups.

Attitudes develop on the basis of evaluative responding to an attitude object, and can also be learned, thus they essentially encompass the indirect and direct experiences one has with the attitude object. Often attitudes are formed as a result of both direct and indirect experiences with the attitude object, as well as linkages between it and other attitude objects (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998). Although there are many diverse definitions of attitudes, the learned nature of attitudes is commonly stressed (Oskamp & Shultz, 2005) and it is generally agreed that attitudes have an evaluative component (Albarracin et al., 2005).



The study of attitudes includes the conceptualization that they are considered to be relatively enduring, long lasting and represented in memory (Oskamp & Shultz, 2005), but also that attitudes are judgements that people form in the moment (Schwarz & Bohner, 2001) and which are largely constructed based on available information at any given time point (Oskamp & Shultz, 2005); thus an attitude can include memories, judgments or both, and attitudes can be more or less permanent. Using this broad conceptualization allows for the opportunity to investigate context effects on attitudes, as well as attitude formation and change (Albarracin et al., 2005).

There are several viewpoints within the literature regarding the different components or nature of attitudes (Albarracin et al., 2005; Oskamp & Shultz, 2005). For example, the tri-componential viewpoint, suggests that an attitude is a separate entity which is made up of three interrelated components: affect, cognition, and behaviour. This view has been challenged by assertions that the three components are not always significantly related or always present with one another, and this may not mean that an attitude is not present (Oskamp & Shultz, 2005). Another viewpoint, known as the separate entities viewpoint (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974) suggests that affect, cognitions and behaviours are three distinct entities which are interrelated. In this case, attitudes are synonymous with the affective component. Finally a third viewpoint, the latent process viewpoint, suggests that attitudes are latent constructs, which are inferred from these three components. Attitudes allow us to understand the relationship between certain stimuli and responses, and this is done through the measurement of observable processes including affective, cognitive and/or behavioural responses (DeFleur & Westie, 1963; Zanna & Rempel, 1988). These viewpoints provide slightly different understandings of the attitude construct but have in common these components.

Researchers have described these three components or information sources (cognitive, affective, and behavioural) that can serve as the basis for attitudes (Olson & Maio, 2003; Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960; Zanna & Rempel, 1988). The cognitive class contains thoughts, beliefs or cognitions, and may also be referred to in the literature as opinions and/or perceptions. The affective class consists of the evaluative aspect and consists of emotions, feelings, and moods. Some researchers consider this component to be synonymous to an attitude; however, as discussed above, there are varied viewpoints. Finally, the behavioural class includes intentions to act and overt actions or behaviours towards the attitude object. Notably, despite the

significant amount of diversity and disagreement over the make-up and definition of attitudes, the majority of theorists do agree that attitudes are inferred. Attitudes thus can be inferred from beliefs, affect, and overt behaviour (Albarracin et al., 2005; Oskamp & Shultz, 2005) and these components interact and influence one another.

In the current study attitudes were evaluated comprehensively and these three components, affect, cognition, and behaviour, were measured using several scales. This would be in keeping with the tri-componential view of attitudes, which has been used by other researchers investigating attitudes toward sex offenders (e.g. Willis, Malinen & Johnston, 2013). The attitude scales included in this research were correlated with one another in an attempt to elicit a thorough and complete understanding of the Canadian public's evaluation or evaluative tendencies (also known as attitudes) towards sexual offenders, and towards sex offender treatment and policy.

### **1.3.2 Stigma**

The concept of stigma has been gaining increasing attention and is relevant for the current topic. Stigma was originally defined by Goffman (1963) as a spoiled identity that discredits a person in society. Attitudes lay the groundwork for stigma, which is essentially a sign of condemnation (Ricciardelli & Moir, 2013). Stigma is an informal means of oppression that strips someone of his or her identity and provides that person a new social identity (Evans & Cubellis, 2015). Sex offenders are a highly stigmatized group in society (Evans & Cubellis, 2015; Griffin & West, 2006; Ricciardelli & Moir, 2013). As a result, their reintegration into the community is heavily impacted by the stigma they face.

Similar to the tripartite nature of attitudes, the concept of stigma can be understood by cognitive, affective, and behavioural components that interact with one another. The cognitive components are termed stereotypes, which are beliefs that perceivers hold about the personal attributes of a group of people (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). Negative affect or feelings towards a group are known as prejudice. Finally, when one acts upon his or her prejudice, and biased behaviour develops towards the target group, this is termed discrimination (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998).

More recently, Link and Phelan (2001) defined stigma as a result of interrelated components (including labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination) that occur together in a power situation. When people are labelled, set apart, or linked to undesirable

characteristics, a justification is constructed for devaluing, rejecting, or excluding them (Link & Phelan, 2001; Ricciardelli & Moir, 2013). Once one is stigmatized, his or her identity is reflective of others' expectations and assumptions (also known as the "virtual social identity") and this alters how that person is perceived (Goffman, 1963). The process of being labeled also arguably shapes one's self-concept. Attitudes lay the groundwork for stigma to take place because they are evaluative (reflect positivity or negativity towards a group), subjective, and exist at conscious and unconscious levels (Maio, Olson, Bernard, & Luke, 2003). Importantly, it has been demonstrated in the literature that negative information (whether cognitive or affective) has a greater impact on overall evaluations of objects than does equally relevant positive information (Ajzen, 2001). Since attitudes set the stage for stigma, which has a behavioural component, it is important to understand the link between attitudes and behaviour.

### **1.3.3 Attitudes and Behaviour**

A significant amount of research has focused on the link between attitudes and behaviour, and it is generally recognized that attitudes are relevant for understanding and predicting social behaviour (Ajzen, 2001). Although initially assumed to relate closely, there was a lack of empirical support for the ability of attitudes to predict behaviours in the early decades of research in this area. Wicker (1969), in his review of the literature, suggested that there was little evidence for any significant relationship between attitudes and overt behaviours; in addition, he questioned the existence of attitudes and whether they were relevant to behaviour at all. Subsequent research has suggested that several factors influence and moderate the relationship between attitudes and behaviour including characteristics of the behaviour, the attitudes, the situation and the person involved (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005; Fazio & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Researchers have outlined several explanations for Wicker's inconsistent findings including response biases, the multidimensionality of attitudes, and other moderating variables (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005).

To ensure potential relationships between attitudes and behaviour can be accurately measured, it is necessary to ensure compatibility between measures of attitude and behaviour, namely the Compatibility Principle (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). The Compatibility Principle specifies that the critical features of the behavioural criterion should be included into the attitude that is assessed as this can help to maximize the predictive power of attitudes. That is, the same action, target, context and time elements must be involved, in order to enable successful

prediction of specific behaviours (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; 2005). High correlations between attitude and behaviour are expected if the Compatibility Principle is followed (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998) and there is empirical evidence that shows specific behaviours can be predicted very well from compatible attitude measures (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). For example, measured attitudes specific to organ donation such as asking a participant how they feel about personally being an organ donor, rather than more general attitudes about organ donation such as asking someone how they feel about the concept of organ donation, were more predictive of actual organ donation (Siegel, Navarro, Tan, & Hyde, 2014).

Attitude and behaviour consistency is determined by embeddedness (or working knowledge), where the amount of attitude-relevant information that is linked to the attitude is predictive of actions (Maio et al., 2003). More general attitudes, rather than highly specific attitudes, can provide useful information to predict and explain broad patterns of discriminatory behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). When the behavioural criterion is represented broadly, there is a strong relationship observed. For example in a study of religiosity, Fishbein and Ajzen (1974) assessed attitudes using several instruments and asked participants to indicate if they participated in 100 related behaviours in the domain. General attitudes were shown to have strong correlations with a cumulative measure across behaviours, but were poor predictors of any one behaviour. Direct experience has also been found to have a moderating effect on the relationship between attitudes and behaviours. Attitudes that are based out of direct experience are more predictive of future behaviour than those based on indirect or second-hand information (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005).

Intentions have been found to predict specific behaviours well, and even more so than attitudes. In an attempt to explain why and how attitudes predict behaviour, researchers have developed several theories including the theories of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), which have strong empirical support. The theory of planned behaviour states that people will act in accordance with their perceived control over the behaviour and their intentions (which are influenced by attitudes towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceptions of control) (Ajzen, 1991). The theory of reasoned action states that one's intentions are the best predictors of their behaviour, and in forming a behavioural intention one considers his or her attitude toward the behaviour, as well as subjective norms related to the behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Combined, the theories of reasoned

action and planned behaviour suggest that intentions are the precursors to behaviours. Intentions about behaviours are assumed to be influenced by three different types of beliefs (control, normative and behavioural) which are themselves influenced by a variety of background factors (individual, social and/or informational) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Furthermore, there are many factors that influence the formation of beliefs, attitudes, intentions and eventually behaviour. In summary, attitudes have been found to be associated with related behaviours and it is theorized that this is explained by their influence on one's intentions. Now, with a better general understanding of attitudes, associated terms, and the link between attitudes and behaviours, it is important to turn to the literature regarding attitudes towards sexual offenders specifically.

## **1.4 Attitudes towards Sex Offenders**

### **1.4.1 Relevance of Attitudes**

The terms sexual offence and sexual offender often provoke strong emotional reactions from people, likely as a result of the invasive nature of this type of offending which results often in violations of one's basic and fundamental human rights. Sex offenders are as a result viewed and treated as distinct from and lesser than other offender groups, by both the public and other offenders (Craig, 2005; Ricciardelli & Moir, 2013). Gaining an understanding of attitudes towards sexual offenders is important because it can inform and impact policy development, treatment of these offenders, resettlement and reintegration strategies and processes, and the development of appropriate community-based support (Brown, Deakin, & Spencer, 2008; Church, Wakeman, Miller, Clements, & Sun, 2008; Corăbian & Hogan, 2012; Willis et al., 2010; Willis et al., 2013). Insofar as they may negatively impact potential empirically supported rehabilitative and reintegration initiatives, negative attitudes and related behaviours towards sex offenders could actually contribute to increased rates of sexual violence in the community. For example, if negative attitudes towards sex offenders leads to a refusal to rent property or employ a former sex offender in a suitable position, this would make it more challenging for a sex offender to reintegrate successfully into the community. As a result, the offender may turn to old high risk behaviours such as substance abuse, and return to higher risk neighborhoods with criminal associates, which are risk factors that place the offender at higher risk to re-offend (Hanson & Bussière, 1998).

There is a growing body of research that has investigated attitudes towards sex offenders and sex offender treatment. Conley, Hill, Stoeckel and Allen (2011) argued that investigating

attitudes towards sex offenders is important because, if they are based in part on incorrect information the policy and legislative decisions that they influence and inform may not correctly reflect public need. This has the potential to cause a variety of negative consequences, including increased sexual recidivism. As a positive example of this type of phenomenon, understanding people's reactions to registered sex offenders can be useful in creating post-release programming and conditions that foster positive reintegration, such as community education, as an alternative to community notification (Kernsmith et al., 2009). Kernsmith and colleagues (2009) identified that community members in a U.S. city report significant fear and anxiety about registered sex offenders, and certain types of sex offenders elicited more fear than others. In recognizing and understanding these emotional reactions, post-release community programs can be put in place to assist in ameliorating the public's adverse reactions and nurturing successful community reintegration through educational programs. This approach has the potential to successfully support sex offender reintegration and would be an alternative to notification policies which have not been successful at reducing recidivism (Kernsmith et al. 2009).

#### **1.4.2 Impacts of the Media**

Mass media have a significant role in the formation of public attitudes more generally, and researchers have confirmed that the media play a significant role in the formation of attitudes towards sexual offenders (Brown et al., 2008; Centre for Sex Offender Management, 2010; Malinen, Willis, & Johnston, 2014; Sample & Kadleck, 2008). In the absence of contact and interaction with sex offenders, public attitudes are more likely influenced by depictions of sex offenders by the media (Brown et al., 2008; Kjelsberg & Loose, 2008).

Many members of the public have reported that they get their information about sex offenders from the media. A U.S. National Public Opinion poll regarding sex offenders revealed that 74% of respondents reported that the media was their main source of knowledge and information about sex offenders (Centre for Sex Offender Management, 2010). Similarly, a UK study found that of the 907 respondents, over 90% reported obtaining their information regarding sex offenders from the media (mainly newsprint media followed by TV media). Only 33% of the sample reported referencing official crime statistics (Brown et al., 2008). A New Zealand study also found that the media were identified as the most important source of information on sex offenders by members of the public (Thakker, 2012).

Brown and colleagues (2008) found that the majority of respondents also felt that the media, in the way sexual offences are represented, exaggerated the fear in society of being a victim of a sexual crime. This exaggeration may contribute to the development of negative stereotypes and erroneous beliefs the public holds towards sexual offenders. U.S. legislators involved in making sex offender policy also indicated that they receive a portion of the information that informs their decisions about sex offender legislation from news accounts. This admission by legislators, combined with the fact that most constituents receive their information from the media, suggests that media play a vital role in framing a policy response to sexual offending (Sample & Kadleck, 2008). In light of this reliance upon the media for information about sex offenders, it is worth considering the nature and quality of the information the media provides, as well as its perceived effects.

**1.4.2.1 Media portrayals.** The media contributes an inaccurate representation of convicted sexual offenders (Malinen et al., 2014). For example, Dowler (2006) found that compared to other violent crimes presented on TV news, sexual crimes were more likely to be presented in a fear context (e.g. stories involving explicit statements of fear such as: I'm scared, be advised, act of random violence, it's too close to home). Mass media portrayals perpetuate fear and research has found that people report a high amount of fear of convicted sex offenders, which varies by type of sexual crime. Investigating which types of sex offenders elicit the most fear using random digit dialing of over 700 members of the public across Michigan State, Kernsmith and colleagues (2009) found that pedophiles and incest offenders were the most feared, while the offenders convicted of spousal or statutory rape were the least feared. Galeste, Fradella and Vogel (2012) investigated the presentation of sex offender myths in print media using systematic random sampling of U.S. newspapers printed during 2009; they found that myths regarding sex offenders (i.e., those regarding high recidivism, a specialization in sexual crimes, offender homogeneity, and treatment non-response) were presented in about one third of articles. They also found that when articles discussed the effectiveness of particular sex offender policies, such as registration/notification, or residence restrictions for example, sex offender myths were also present.

Professionals, sex offenders and the public were surveyed on their attitudes about the media's impact on sex offender reintegration, and the researchers found that all three groups perceived the media's portrayals of sex offenders as negatively impacting several factors related

to offender risk and reintegration (Corăbian & Hogan, 2012). The majority of participants in each group perceived the media's negative portrayal of sex offenders as impacting a variety of risk factors including impacting an offenders' ability to find appropriate housing, employment, and to formulate positive relationships. Thus, the media's portrayals of sex offenders, which often take the form of sensationalized reports of rare events, are perceived to have an impact on effective offender reintegration and desistance (Corăbian & Hogan, 2012).

With all of this in mind, it is reasonable to hypothesize that negative media portrayals have influenced public attitudes towards sex offenders and have shaped some of the policies the public would be willing to support. Furthermore, if communities are fearful of the mass media-produced conceptualization of the prototypical sex offender (a misnomer in itself), successful reintegration and desistance, which involves the public's willingness to accept and absorb the ex-offender back into society, is near impossible (Fox, 2015). It is important next to have an understanding of common public beliefs about sex offenders.

#### **1.4.3 Common Misconceptions and Accurate Beliefs**

Sex offenders, more than other offender groups, are highly stigmatized (Evans & Cubellis, 2015) and vilified by the public and media. It is likely that the stigma is a result of stereotypical views of sex offenders, which are based on misconceptions about this population (Payne & DeMichele, 2008). Researchers have found that the public tends to overestimate offending and recidivism rates and endorses other erroneous stereotypes about sex offenders (e.g., Brannon et al., 2007; Brown et al., 2008; Craun & Theriot, 2009; Fortney, Levenson, Brannon, & Baker, 2007; Levenson, Brannon, Fortney, & Baker, 2007; Olver & Barlow, 2010). One UK study found that the public surveyed estimated the rate of sexual offending to be almost 20% over the actual rate and also overestimated the recidivism rates of these offenders (Brown et al., 2008). Olver and Barlow (2010) also found that Canadian university students overestimated sex offender recidivism rates, which on average they estimated to be 60%.

Another common myth regarding sex offenders is that they do not benefit from treatment. One U.S. study found that the majority of the public surveyed did not believe that sex offenders could be rehabilitated. The authors suggest this may be a result of several factors including: the stigma surrounding sex offenders, the associated misconceptions that the public has about this group, and perhaps a general lack of faith in rehabilitation for all offenders, not only sex offenders (Payne, Tewksbury, & Mustaine, 2010). Other commonly endorsed sex



offender myths and beliefs are: an overestimation of the number of offenders who are strangers to their victims, that the majority of sex offenders were abused as children, that half of sex offenders are seriously mentally ill, and that sex offenders tend to use aggression and force when committing a sexual offence (Fuselier, Durham, & Wurtele, 2002; Fortney et al., 2007; Levenson et al., 2007).

According to the evidence, only a minority (13.4% over approximately 5 years) of sexual offenders re-offend, and certainly when compared with other offending groups such as non-sexual violent offenders or property offenders, sexual offenders recidivate at a much lower rate (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Sample & Bray, 2003). The majority of sexual offenders are known to their victims. For example according to the 2014 violent victimization incidents reported by Canadians, over 52% of sexual assault victims knew their attacker (Perrault, 2015). Furthermore, offenders with child victims even more often are known to their victims and according to the National Incident-Based Reporting System in the U.S., 93% of child sexual abuse perpetrators knew their victims (Snyder, 2000). Furthermore, there is evidence to support the conclusion that treatment is effective for sex offenders in reducing recidivism (Kim, Benekos, & Merlo, 2015). In terms of rates of mental illness, it is true that mental illness is highly prevalent among offender populations including sexual offenders, and in particular substance abuse is highly prevalent. However, major mental illness has not been found to be a significant predictor of sexual re-offending (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004). Kingston, Olver, Harris, Wong and Bradford (2015) recently completed a prospective study looking at the predictive accuracy of mental disorders in a Canadian sex offender sample. As predicted, diagnoses of mental illness (particularly non-substance related disorders) were not significantly associated with recidivism, with a few exceptions including substance use disorders, and sexual sadism. Finally, the relationship between childhood victimization and sexually offending in adulthood is complex, but in general, adult sex offenders are not significantly more likely to have experienced child sexual abuse themselves (Hanson & Bussière, 1998), and there is no evidence to suggest a cause-effect interaction.

One study investigated misconceptions of sex offence perpetration, and the link between awareness of a neighborhood sex offender and misperceptions (Craun & Theriot, 2009). Using a mail questionnaire randomly distributed among a southeastern U.S. county, results indicated that respondents were not exclusively focused on the erroneous “stranger danger” misperception of

child sex offenders; in fact, approximately 70% of the sample expressed equal or more concern about known offenders (versus unknown). While this was a promising result, it was also found that those who were aware of a local neighborhood sex offender were also more likely (2.56 times) to endorse the stranger danger misperceptions. In contrast, those who had experienced violent victimization were less likely to endorse this misperception. Thus, these authors concluded that legislation (such as public registries) intended to inform the public can have unintended negative consequences; it can mislead the public to focus their attention on the least likely offenders, while also contributing to a false sense of security regarding legitimate risks (Craun & Theriot, 2009).

#### **1.4.4 Demographic Differences in Attitudes**

In examining the literature related to demographic differences in attitudes towards sex offenders, Willis and colleagues (2010) noted that findings are mixed. While some studies do find differences in attitudes as a result of particular demographic variables, such as gender, others do not. In general, increased contact with offenders (whether personal or professional) was correlated with less negative attitudes, although variation exists depending on the nature of the relationship or interaction. As previously mentioned, increased contact with this population, even as a victim, was been found to be associated with endorsement of fewer sex offender myths (Craun & Theriot, 2009). Researchers utilizing the Attitudes towards Sex Offenders (ATS) scale (Hogue, 1993) have found that generally, those with more contact in a treatment setting (e.g. treatment providers), those who have specialized training or education, and sex offenders themselves had more positive views when compared to students and community members. However, prison staff (such as prison or correctional officers) and police officers tend to hold more negative attitudes when compared to other professionals such as psychologists and other forensic staff (Higgins & Ireland, 2009; Hogue, 1993; Lea, Auburn, & Kibblewhite, 1999). This is likely a result of the specific role the staff plays (i.e. monitoring and enforcing versus treating) and the amount of time spent with any one specific offender. Another study by Nelson, Herlihy and Oescher (2002) found that counsellors with more experience had more positive attitudes towards sex offenders, suggesting that negative attitudes are not necessarily static over time.

Olver and Barlow (2010) looked at demographic variables, personality traits and attitudes towards sex offenders using a group of 78 undergraduate students. These authors found no significant differences among most demographic variables, including gender, income, political

orientation, and ethnicity, and attitudes towards sex offenders. One significant difference found was related to religious affiliation; generally, those without a religious affiliation had slightly more pro-rehabilitative attitudes. Similar to Brown and colleagues (2008), this sample overestimated the recidivism rate for sex offenders (with an estimate of 60% on average), with females estimating significantly higher rates than males. However, estimated rates for treated offenders were significantly lower (approximately 40%) (Olver & Barlow, 2010).

An Australian study looking at public attitudes towards sex offenders found that educational attainment was the only demographic variable measured (of 11) that systematically influenced attitudes: those with more education held less negative attitudes towards sex offenders (Shackley, Weiner, Day, & Willis, 2013). No significant differences in attitudes were found as a result of age or parental status, although it is notable that only a small proportion of respondents had children. In contrast to their hypothesis, those who had a significant other were more likely to rate sex offenders more positively which the authors suggested may have been because those who are in a relationship feel more secure and thus have less of a fear response towards sex offenders. Payne and colleagues (2010) surveyed over 750 Americans about their beliefs regarding sex offender rehabilitation and the only demographic variable that influenced perceptions was minority status; being a member of a minority group was associated with the perception that sex offenders could not be rehabilitated (Payne et al., 2010). In the UK, Harper and Hogue (2015) surveyed 400 members of the public using a recently created scale called the Perceptions of Sex Offender (PSO) scale. They found that females had significantly more negative views about sex offenders compared to men, which may be a result of the fact that the majority of victims of sexual offences are women (Perrault 2015). Harper and Hogue (2015) also observed the general trend that those who knew a sex offender had less negative views.

Willis and colleagues (2013) considered the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of attitudes when they investigated demographic differences in public attitudes with a New Zealand community sample of over 400 adults. They used the Community Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders scale (CATSO; Church et al., 2008) to measure the cognitive dimension, a 7 point Likert scale item asking about how one generally feels about sex offenders (very positive—very negative) to measure the affective dimension, and a researcher-created social distance scale, developed to get at the behavioural dimension. Although all respondents did not differ in the affective domain (i.e., they all felt equally negative about sexual offenders when

asked in a general sense), those with higher educational attainment had less negative attitudes towards sex offenders as measured by the cognitive and behavioural domains. Men also had less negative attitudes than women, in the affective and behavioural domains. There were no differences in attitudes as a result of age, parental status, or occupation. Malinen and colleagues (2014) found similar gender effects in their own study, finding that women estimated higher rates of sex offender recidivism, and had significantly more negative attitudes than men.

As the above literature demonstrates, there are some demographic differences among public attitudes towards sex offenders such as the finding that women generally have more negative attitudes than men. However, relatively few other patterns emerge consistently and attitudes are quite varied and complex. As a result, changing attitudes towards sex offenders is likely a complicated yet worthwhile endeavour.

#### **1.4.5 Modifying Attitudes towards Sex Offenders**

Several studies have investigated the effects of education on attitudes towards sex offenders (e.g., Craig, 2005; Hogue, 1995; Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008; Kleban & Jeglic, 2012; Taylor, Keddle, & Lee, 2003) and there is some evidence suggesting that attitudes towards sex offenders can change as a result of training. Hogue (1995) evaluated the efficacy of sex offender training with multidisciplinary workers from British prisons and found that attitudes, as measured by the ATS, were significantly more positive post-training. Taylor and colleagues (2003) examined the effectiveness of a two and a half-day workshop on the attitudes of nurses and social workers working with sex offenders with intellectual disabilities. Using a self-developed scale of attitudes towards sex offenders, the Sex Offender Knowledge and Attitudes Questionnaire (Taylor et al., 2003) that was provided to participants before and after completing the workshop, they found significant improvements in attitudes and knowledge about sex offenders. While some researchers have found positive effects, others have not been as successful in altering attitudes.

A recent review of the limited research on attitude change towards sex offenders suggests that brief educational programs may be ineffective at changing the attitudes of professionals working with sex offenders, including the attitudes of prison employees and police officers (Willis et al., 2010). For example, Craig (2005) did not find significant differences in overall attitudes (as reflected in the total score on the ATS) before and after an implemented workshop, however there were significant differences among scores on particular items on the scale, which

related to less negative attitudes post-workshop. Craig suggested the null overall result may be because the workshop was designed to improve knowledge rather than alter attitudes. However, as discussed earlier, it has been theorized that attitudes are comprised of or influenced by three components (affective, cognitive, and behavioural), thus, arguably, these results suggest a shift in the cognitive component of one's attitude. Kjelsberg and Loos (2008) investigated the attitudes of prison employees before and after an educational program implemented on the subject of sexual offenders and offences. They found no significant differences in ATS mean scores prior to and one year following the program. These authors suggested it may have been overly optimistic to expect such long lasting results one year later, especially with attitudes which are expected to be deeply ingrained and emotionally driven (Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008).

More recent exploratory studies suggest that there may be hope yet for altering attitudes. Kleban and Jeglic (2012) investigated whether attitudes towards sex offender treatment could be changed as a result of a brief psychoeducational intervention, with over 400 undergraduate students. Study one used a between subjects design where students were randomly assigned to either the experimental group (that included an online sex offender psychoeducational module) or the control group (assigned to review a module related to drug abuse). In study two, they looked at which intervention style was most effective at influencing change from more punitive to more rehabilitative attitudes, through a mixed design, by assigning participants in the experimental condition to one of three groups: reading, presentation, or discussion group. Following these interventions participants were all asked to complete the ATS (Hogue, 1993) and the Attitudes Towards Treatment of Sex Offenders (ATTSO; Wnuk, Chapman, & Jeglic, 2006). Findings showed that the brief intervention had a significant effect on attitudes and that the nature of the intervention influenced the amount of attitude change achieved. The discussion group format was the most efficacious method for changing these attitudes. The authors noted that although the use of undergraduate student body was appropriate for their exploratory study, their results may not generalize and perhaps the attitudes of undergraduates are easier to change than those of other demographic groups. The authors suggested that further investigation be conducted with a more diverse representative sample and with a follow-up measure to assess any long-term impacts of the intervention (Kleban & Jeglic, 2012).

In an exploratory study Malinen and colleagues (2014) investigated if an informative media portrayal (which included empirical research findings on offender recidivism), versus a

typical media portrayal of sex offenders (which was fear-inducing), would influence people's attitudes towards released sex offenders. They investigated differences among the three dimensions of attitudes using the following measures: a cognitive measure (the CATSO scale, Church et al., 2008), an affective measure (a feeling thermometer), a behavioural measure (a social distance scale), and an implicit attitude measure (the Single-Target Implicit Association Test or ST-IAT; Wigboldus, Holland, & van Kippenberg, 2005); they also asked participants ( $n = 87$  university students) to estimate sex offender recidivism rates. They found that the informative intervention was most likely to positively influence the cognitive component of attitudes, followed by the social distance scale scores and recidivism estimate measures. Participants in this study had very negative feelings towards sex offenders (mean scores for all three groups fell below 35 on the feeling thermometer) and negative implicit associations. No group differences were found for the affective and implicit measures of attitudes (Malinen et al., 2014), which makes sense given their more automatic nature.

The current findings suggest that the provision of information can be influential in changing attitudes, although more work in this area is certainly warranted. Specifically it was found that behaviour was more closely linked to the cognitive components of attitudes (rather than affective), and therefore focusing change efforts on this component will be important (Malinen et al., 2014). Researchers have also emphasized the importance of considering the multidimensional nature of attitudes when looking to alter attitudes, especially in light of their impact on reentry interventions at the community level (Malinen et al., 2014; Willis et al., 2013; Willis et al., 2010).

As seen from the literature summarized above, misperceptions about sex offenders are common and sex offenders evoke fear among the public. These factors have contributed to current societal responses to sex offenders, including specialized sex offender legislation. The following section will include an overview of sex offender related policies.

## **1.5 Sex Offender Policy**

### **1.5.1 Formation and Intent of Sex Offender Policies**

As previously stated, research regarding sex offender recidivism has consistently found that sexual offending has one of the lowest base rates of all criminal offences (Ducat, Thomas, & Blood, 2009). However, these offences continue to cause the most outrage, to arouse the most panic in and prompt the greatest precautions taken by the community.

Sutherland (1950) investigated the ratification of sexual psychopath laws in the U.S. and noticed that singular isolated incidents committed by repeat offenders that were extensively covered and sensationalized in the media provoked public indignation and panic. This in turn prompted officials to target the problem by demanding legislative reform. Looking at the origin of more recent protective legislation (including sex offender registries, community notification laws, and housing restrictions), these acts were instituted as a result of public outcry and panic in response to highly publicized heinous sexual and violent crimes against a small number of individual children, by stranger perpetrators (Levenson, 2011; Sample & Kadleck, 2008; Willis et al., 2010). Fortunately, these types of offences are rare. Furthermore, child sexual violence cases most commonly involve offenders who are well known to their victims (Levenson, 2011). Nonetheless, sex offender policies tend to develop as reactions based on “moral panics” to these rare and serious crimes (Sample, Evans & Anderson, 2011) propelled by the media. Sample and Kadleck (2008) interviewed 35 legislators from the state of Illinois and most public officials indicated that beyond the media, another important source of information regarding sex offenders are members of the public, who demand action. Public fear may be aroused by media coverage of a specific sexual violent offence, and this drives the creation of groups of concerned citizens which eventually manage to influence elected public officials to act (Sample & Kadleck, 2008). The primary goals of sex offender management policies, such as assisting with effective investigation of sexual crimes, providing dependable strategies to punish and prevent re-offending, and implementing a sustainable prevention strategy, are honorable and few would disagree with their merit (Lobanov-Rostovsky & Harris, 2016). The issue is not the goals but rather the manner in which these goals are executed (Lobanov-Rostovsky & Harris, 2016). Some of these policies are created specifically to manage sexual offenders, such as sex offender registries, while others are more broad/general policies (i.e., targeting violent offenders or any type of offender) but are often utilized to manage sex offenders, such as GPS monitoring.

Researchers have argued that public policy laws can have: symbolic functions, which are meant to appease public concern, instrumental functions/effects, which are intended to have an influence on behaviour (Sample et al., 2011), or perhaps both. Symbolic policies are noted to provide some basic functions including reassuring the public that something is being done to address the issue at hand and solidifying moral boundaries by classifying public consensus of what is right and wrong (Stolz, 1983). Instrumental functions include impacting public action.

For example, one of the intended instrumental functions of notification legislation is to have the public participate actively in their own safety, by providing them with offender information that they can use to identify and monitor offender activities, as well as protect themselves (Sample et al., 2011).

According to Torjman (2005), public policy seeks to achieve a desired goal considered in the best interest of all society. It has been noted in the literature that public policies designed to restrict and control sexual offenders are intended to appease and alleviate misplaced public fear, unrest and outrage (Bersot & Arrigo, 2015; Tewksbury, Jennings, & Zgoba, 2012). Sex offender policies appear framed and influenced by public perception, media coverage of rare and heinous sex crimes, and personal opinion (McCartan & Kemshall, 2015; Sample & Kadleck, 2008). As a result of the panic and fear responses associated with sex offenders, societal reactions have influenced the production of policies that have often been general and wide-ranging-i.e. they have been enacted (Lobonov-Rostovsky & Harris, 2016). The most frequently implemented formal controls of sex offenders, beyond incarceration, include legal/criminal sanctions, such as probation, mandated treatment, sex offender registries (SORs), DNA data banks, community notification, GPS monitoring, and residence restrictions (Kruttschnitt et al., 2000; Levenson & D'Amora, 2007; Willis et al., 2010).

The following section will provide an overview of the main sex offender policies currently in use in the U.S. and Canada, as well as policies used in both countries and in other countries around the world. Policies which have a more punitive intention, and those with a more rehabilitative focus will be discussed, however it important to keep in mind that some policies can serve both purposes.

### **1.5.2 U.S. Policies**

In the United States, there are a variety of policies in place to manage sex offenders in the community (Galeste et al., 2012; Petrunik, 2002; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009). According to Levenson (2011), the U.S. has the most aggressive community protection policies worldwide. Due to the drastically low social ranking and negative associations with sex offenders in society, punishments for sex offenders have become increasingly punitive and lengthy (Leon, 2011; Meloy, Curtis, & Boatwright, 2013; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009). Although U.S. policies often represent extreme examples, a significant amount of knowledge regarding diverse and aggressive sex offender public policy and its impact is available from the U.S. Given that the



U.S. is one of Canada's closest allies and the more recent shift towards conservative approaches to sex offender management which resembles U.S. policy, it is important to look at the literature from this area and consider what is similar, what is different, and what can be learned from U.S. policy.

**1.5.2.1 Sex offender registration and community notification laws.** Although several states (including Washington in 1990 and Minnesota in 1991) had already established sex offender registries, which are databases of information about previously convicted sex offenders, the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act of 1994 led to the development of sex offender registries across the country (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006). The Jacob Wetterling Act was implemented following the abduction of a young boy named Jacob from his hometown in Minnesota by a suspected violent pedophile; neither Jacob's body nor his attacker were ever found (Petrunik, 2002). Information contained in registries include offender demographics, their current address, and a description of their offences. Registrants are required to remain on the list a minimum of 10 years and depending on the severity of their offence, may require lifetime registration (Cucolo & Perlin, 2013; Tewksbury & Lees, 2007).

In 1996, Jacob's law was amended to include the implementation of New Jersey's Registration and Community Notification Laws, also known as "Megan's Law" (Cucolo & Perlin, 2013). Megan's Law was responsible for making information contained in sex offender registry databases available to the public. This law was passed following the murder of a 7-year-old New Jersey girl, Megan Kanka, by a previously convicted and unmonitored sex offender living in her community (Montana, 1995; Tewksbury & Lees, 2007). This community notification law was federally mandated but state administered until the implementation of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act (also known as the AWA or the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act, SORNA) in 2006, which was geared towards tougher penalties for sexual and violent child offenders. The AWA created standardized mandates for the process of registration and notification across the U.S. (Brannon et al., 2007; Cucolo & Perlin, 2013; Leon, 2011). This new act expanded qualifying crimes and registration requirements, required longer durations on the registry, included the registration of juveniles as young as 14 years old, and mandated states to categorize offenders by offence in a three tiered system which correspond to a specific duration of registration (Cucolo & Perlin, 2013; Levenson

& Tewksbury, 2009). The tiers do not reflect risk of recidivism but rather are classifications of offence history and nature of and severity of offences, without consideration of other risk factors (Harris, Lobanov-Rostovsky, & Levenson, 2010). The AWA was signed on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abduction of 6-year-old Adam Walsh from a Florida mall, who was later found murdered 16 days after his kidnapping. Notification varies from state to state in terms of the degree of notification provided for offenders at differing risk levels, which offenders the community receives information about, and how easily the information can be accessed (Meloy, Saleh, & Wolff, 2007).

Sex offender registration and notification (SORN) laws are intended to heighten public awareness of sex offenders and to provide information to communities that people can use to protect themselves and their children (Galeste et al., 2012; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006). The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (1994) mandates states across the U.S. to enact SORN legislation in order to avoid a 10% loss in federal funding devoted to drug control (Elbogen, Patry, & Scalora, 2003). It was estimated that, as of late 2010, there were over 720 000 registered sex offenders in the United States (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2010), and that number is expected to grow with new sex crime convictions and the release of sex offenders from prison (Levenson, 2011).

**1.5.2.2 Residence restrictions.** Residence restrictions are among the most popular new types of sex offender management laws in the U.S. (Levenson, 2011; Meloy, Miller, & Curtis, 2008). These laws are intended to reduce recidivism by constraining where offenders live and venture, thereby limiting offenders' access to children (Tofte & Fellner, 2007). Common proximity zones are 1000-2000 ft. from venues such as schools, parks, playgrounds and daycares (Levenson, 2011). Such laws vary by state and can restrict where sex offenders can "work, walk, or be physically present" (Meloy et al., 2008, p. 210).

**1.5.2.3 Civil commitment: Sexual Violent Predator status.** Civil commitment originally was intended to treat offenders who were mentally ill and dangerous, however now it is used to detain sex offenders after their maximum sentences have expired (Levenson, 2003). Sexually violent predator (SVP) status replaced the former sexual psychopath laws from the early 1920s. This designation is intended to target sex offenders considered at high risk to reoffend violently after they are released from prison (Petrunik, Murphy, & Fedoroff, 2008). If an application is successful, the offender will continue to be confined in a secure setting (i.e.,

will serve post-sentence civil commitment) after he has completed his sentence, for the purposes of treatment and/or reducing his risk of re-offending (Cohen & Jeglic, 2007). This legislation is technically civil and not criminal in nature (although some call it quasi-criminal), because it has the intent to protect the public by preventing future violent sexual offences, rather than to punish offenders for their crimes (Petrunik et al., 2008). Four criteria must be proven in order for offenders to be eligible for civil commitment: conviction of a sexual offence, a mental disorder/abnormality or serious difficulty controlling behaviours that would lead to a new offence, the likelihood to reoffend, and a clear connection between the first two and third criteria (Cohen & Jeglic, 2007).

### **1.5.3 Canadian Policies**

Although geographical neighbors, Canadian sex offender policy has been historically much less punitive and more rehabilitative than that of the U.S., and has been influenced significantly by British legislation. Furthermore, differences in legal emphasis (i.e., due process versus control) in the justice system, and differences in federal versus state/provincial responsibilities, have resulted in different approaches to managing sex offenders (Petrunik et al., 2008).

**1.5.3.1 Sex offender registries.** In Canada, there are two sex offender registries: the Ontario Sex Offender Registry (OSOR) and the National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR); both registries were established within the last 10-15 years (Murphy, Fedoroff, & Martineau, 2009; Petrunik, 2002). Ontario was the first province to establish a sex offender registry, as a result of a Coroner's Inquest into the sexual assault and murder of a young boy named Christopher Stephenson by a sex offender who was on parole. The OSOR, or "Christopher's Law", as it is commonly known, came into effect in 2001 (Murphy et al., 2009). Following Ontario's lead, other provinces began to establish their own provincial registries, until 2004 when the NSOR was implemented (Petrunik, 2002). The NSOR is maintained and administered by the RCMP and the intended purpose of this registry is to assist police with the investigations of sexual crimes and provide them with up-to-date information on convicted sex offenders across Canada (Murphy et al., 2009).

Under the SOIRA, or Bill C-16, anyone (including young offenders tried as adults) who is convicted of a designated offence, such as sexual exploitation, sexual interference, sexual assault, and possession and/or distribution of child pornography, is eligible to be placed on the

NSOR (SOIRA, 2004). To be placed on the NSOR following a conviction of a designated offence, the Crown prosecutor must make a formal request and apply for a Form 52 Sex Offender Registration Order and offenders must be specifically ordered to by a judge to register. Failure to register or reporting false information is a criminal code offence and can result in a fine and/or jail time. Offender registration can last from 10 years to life and information contained in such registries includes information about the type of offence, victim characteristics, offender photo, age, and address. Canadian registry information, in contrast to American legislation, is not available to the public (Murphy et al., 2009).

**1.5.3.2 Public notification.** In contrast to the U.S., Canada has taken a cautious approach to community notification (Petrunik et al., 2008). In Canada there is no federally mandated community notification and the federal government is only obliged to notify other levels of government (provincial and municipal police officials) when federal inmates are released for any reason. Particular provinces (e.g. B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Newfoundland) have set up their own community notification systems, which are governed by provincial community safety legislation (Petrunik et al., 2008). In Canada public notification systems are separate from the registration process (Murphy & Federoff, 2013). These provincial notification systems have materialized because victim advocates and some police officials argue that people have a right to know when high-risk offenders are released (Petrunik et al., 2008). Separate legislation related to each province's freedom of information act allows disclosure of information to the public regarding high-risk violent or sexual offenders who are released from prison, where there are reasonable grounds for believing disclosure is in the public interest (Murphy et al., 2009; Petrunik et al., 2008). This disclosure is similar to American community notification policies, whereby the public is provided with offender information upon release from police, via the media.

**1.5.3.3 Community supervision: 810 Recognizance order.** In order to deal with high-risk offenders (including sex offenders) returning to the community upon sentence expiration, section 810 of the CCC allows restrictions to be placed on individuals considered at high risk to reoffend, but who are not currently under judicial supervision. If reasonable grounds can be proven, through the completion of a risk assessment, that a person is likely to commit a future sexual crime, an 810 order can be made (Lussier, Gress, Deslauries-Varin, & Amirault, 2014). This order is not a conviction and is a result of an application from the Crown or police. In 1995,

Section 810 was amended and Sections 810.1 (focusing on persons at risk of sexually offending against persons 14 years or younger) and 810.2 (focusing on persons at risk of personal injury offences which have included sexual assault or aggravated sexual assault) were introduced. If an 810.1/810.2 order is imposed, it is in effect for up to two years after which it may be renewed (Lussier et al, 2014; Petrunik et al., 2008). These orders impose conditions upon at risk sex offenders who would otherwise be under no other legal dispositions. Although not a conviction in itself, a breach of any conditions specified by an 810 order is considered a criminal offence. Typical candidates for an 810 order are federally sentenced adult sex offenders who have been denied parole as a result of being considered high risk, and are detained until warrant expiry. If under an 810 order, these offenders are typically subject to regular probation services from provincial agencies (Lussier et al., 2014).

**1.5.3.4 Dangerous offender (DO) designation.** The DO designation in Canada has been in existence since 1977 and is intended to target offenders who have been convicted of a serious personal injury offence (including sexual offences), manifest a pattern of aggressive behaviour or inability to control impulses, and are not considered manageable in the community (Petrunik, 2002). DO status, if relevant, is determined and applied at time of sentencing and once applied the status remains in force for life. Offenders with DO status are ineligible to apply for parole for seven years, and face an indeterminate sentence or lifetime parole if released (Public Safety Canada, 2015). In 2007, the Canadian Senate passed new legislation that made the imposition of DO designation automatic following a third conviction for a designated offence; the onus was now on the offender to provide evidence as to why DO status should not be imposed and a determinate sentence or Long Term Offender designation be given instead (Petrunik et al., 2008).

**1.5.3.5 Long Term Offender (LTO) designation.** The LTO designation came into effect in Canada in 1997. This designation allows courts to issue a probation order of up to ten years, in addition to regular incarceration, for offenders who are deemed high risk to reoffend (Petrunik, 2002). In essence, LTO offenders must meet similar criteria to DO offenders, but undergo less stringent controls; these offenders did not require an indeterminate sentence as a DO because it was deemed their risk could be managed within a community setting. Offenders who do not comply with the terms of their LTO supervision are liable to receive a prison term of up to ten years (Petrunik et al., 2008; Solicitor General of Canada, 2001). The majority of

LTO's have current and/or prior convictions of sexual offences (Correctional Service Canada, 2002).

**1.5.3.6 Recent Canadian policies.** Although there are significant differences in policy between Canada and the U.S., recently enacted legislation such as Bill C-10 (the Safe Streets and Communities Act) and Bill C-26 (the Tougher Penalties for Child Predators Act) suggests that Canadian sex offender policy is beginning to take a similar approach to the U.S. Bill C-10 was enacted in March of 2012 and was intended to better protect children and youth from sexual predators and extend and enhance the safety and security of all Canadians. It included, among other changes, amendments to the CCC to: increase and/or impose mandatory minimum penalties for certain child sexual offences (e.g., sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, and offences related to child pornography); created several new offence categories related to making sexually explicit material available to a child and arranging to commit a sexual offence against a child; expanded the list of specific conditions added to probation and recognizance orders (e.g., permitting the court to prohibit the offender from using a computer system for the purpose of communication with a person under 16.); and expanded the list of designated offences that give rise to such orders (Safe Streets and Communities Act, 2012). Bill C-26 was first read to the House of Commons in February 2014 and received royal assent in June 2015. It includes nine key measures geared towards sex offenders such as: requiring consecutive sentencing for certain offences, increasing minimum and maximum sentencing for certain sexual offences, increasing penalties for parole violations, increasing monitoring and requirements of offenders traveling outside the country, increasing information sharing among officials, and granting the public access to high risk offender information (specifically the enactment of the High Risk Child Sex Offender Database Act). This database will contain information on high-risk child sex offenders who have previously been the subject of a public notification in a national publicly accessible database (Tougher Penalties for Child Predators Act, 2015).

#### **1.5.4 Additional Sex Offender Policies**

Beyond the above discussed policies which are particular to each country, there are a variety of policies and approaches to managing sex offenders which are quite common in both countries and thus also worthy of discussing. First, the more punitive/restrictive policies will be discussed. These include: longer sentencing, libido reducing treatments, and electronic

monitoring. Next, rehabilitative approaches will be discussed, which include: Risk-Need-Responsivity or RNR informed approaches, sex offender treatment and circles of support.

**1.5.4.1 Longer and indeterminate sentencing and mandatory minimums.** Both in the U.S. and Canada, there has been a recent increase in criminal sanctions for sex offenders, and particularly for child offenders (Lobonov-Rostovsky & Harris, 2016). In the U.S., lifetime supervision and indeterminate sentences have been enacted in certain states as an alternative to civil commitment (Centre for Sex Offender Management, 2008). In Canada, the above discussed DO and LTO laws are the parallel legislation. Both countries have also enacted mandatory minimum sentences for particular crimes (including sexual crimes). In contrast to mandatory sentences elsewhere, in Canada there is an absence of any provision for judicial discretion for those convicted of relevant offences (Canada, Department of Justice, 2015; Robert, Crutcher & Verbrugge, 2007).

**1.5.4.2 Electronic monitoring (EM) and global positioning system (GPS).** A tool used more frequently over the past several decades, to monitor sex offenders in the community, and particularly in the U.S., is GPS tracking. GPS is a type of EM, which is the broader category. There are three types of GPS monitoring that are commonly used: active (provides location information in real time), passive (provides GPS and time data once daily), and hybrid (provides data points every few hours) (DeMichele & Payne, 2009). The idea behind this monitoring is that offenders, while being monitored, will be deterred from engaging in criminal activities. One advantage of using GPS as a supervision tool is that it provides real time information regarding the movement and location of sexual offenders (Levenson & D'Amora, 2007) which may serve to enhance accuracy of supervision. However, such tracking cannot directly prevent sexual crimes from occurring and rather is used for prosecution (Meloy et al., 2007).

In Canada, EM has been used for several decades to assist police in monitoring offenders in the community. Originally intended to enforce house arrest, EM has since become a community-based alternative to incarceration, but it may be employed at various stages of the criminal justice system including pre-trial and following incarceration (Bonta, Wallace-Capretta, & Rooney, 1999; Bottos, 2007). More recently the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) has been amended by Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act to allow Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to demand offenders wear monitoring devices to monitor their compliance with conditions related to their release or long-term supervision (Wilson, 2013).

Currently there are several provinces that use EM and most often it is being used for persons serving provincial sentences who are under a probation order or conditional sentence. The cost of monitoring varies from \$5-22 a day and depends on the type of tracking used: GPS monitoring is the most expensive (Wilson, 2013).

**1.5.4.3 Libido reducing treatment.** Another form of treatment for sex offenders that has been used for many decades is libido-reducing drug treatment, also referred to as chemical castration, antiandrogen medication, hormonal medication, or antilibidinal medication (Kutcher, 2010). This treatment is intended to lower testosterone, the male hormone thought to play an important role in sexuality, aggression, and personality, to prepubertal levels. The intention is to directly decrease sexual urges and arousal and thus suppress sexually deviant thinking and behaviour, which may contribute to particular criminal actions (Del Busto & Harlow, 2011). Treatment can occur chemically (with medications) or surgically. Chemical castration is considered a reversible “drug-induced biochemical mimicry of surgical castration” (Kutcher, 2010, p. 197). Appropriate candidate selection is critical for this type of treatment modality; ideal candidates are offenders who have relatively high, untreated recidivism rates and who are likely to respond to such treatment. Currently, 9 U.S. states use this treatment, although they vary in the modality used (chemical vs. surgical) and vary in whether or not the treatment is mandatory or voluntary (Del Busto & Harlow, 2011).

Beyond the U.S. and Canada, libido reducing drug treatment is also practiced in Europe and parts of Asia (Kutcher, 2010), although the treatment is considered voluntary (Harrison, 2008). In Canada, the use of this treatment was found constitutional in the cases of recidivist sexual offenders with Long Term Offender status. The Parole Board of Canada may require long term offenders to take libido reducing drugs as part of their release conditions, however offenders can choose not to undergo treatment and remain in prison (Kutcher, 2010).

**1.5.4.4 RNR model informed policy.** The RNR approach assesses and assigns offenders to participate in programming based on offender risk, need, and responsivity to intervention. Generally, the RNR approach focuses on criminogenic needs and risk factors as targets for treatment, including the central eight factors associated with recidivism: history of antisocial behaviour, antisocial personality pattern, antisocial cognitions, antisocial associates, family/marital, school/work, leisure/recreation, and substance abuse (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Andrews et al., 2006). Given these targets, RNR model-based policy would include providing



therapy to offenders to target, for example, antisocial cognitions and build coping skills, as well as assist offenders in finding appropriate housing and employment. This model is widely supported and can take various forms and approaches to offender management, as long as the general principles are respected. Currently, the continuum of care provided by CSC, which includes the institutional and community care of convicted sex offenders, follows an RNR model (Correctional Service Canada, 2011).

**1.5.4.5 Sex offender treatment.** Treatment specifically for sex offenders originated in the 1970s although early programs lacked a solid research base. Nonetheless, treatment in the form of psychotherapy for sex offenders has been utilized widely both in and out of prisons. In Canada, sex offender treatment is offered to all eligible offenders in federal prisons, and participation is voluntary. One's decision to participate in treatment as well as one's engagement within treatment is well documented. This information is considered by the Parole Board of Canada in making decisions about whether an offender is released into the community or held until their warrant expiry date.

According to a recent survey of programs in the U.S. and Canada, the majority of treatment programs offered for adult male offenders use a cognitive-behavioural model. The second most popular model used is relapse prevention and other program models include self-regulation and good lives models (Ellerby, McGrath, Cumming, Burchard, & Zeoli, 2010). Problems linked to risk for sexual re-offending, or criminogenic needs, are the most important treatment targets for reducing recidivism (Hanson, Bourgon, Helmus, & Hodgson, 2009). The majority of adult sex offender programs target the following areas in treatment: intimacy/relationship skills, emotional regulation, and social skills and the majority of institutional programs attend to arousal control (Ellerby et al., 2010). Group therapy is the most common treatment mode offered, particularly in the community-based programs, and individual therapy is more prevalent in institutions. The average number of months in treatment for adult males is five, most programs provide aftercare or step-down services, and completion rates are reported to be between 89-96%. Although polygraph testing is commonly used to verify treatment supervision compliance in the U.S., this is not common in Canada. Canadian programs also do not require that clients fully disclose their sexual offending behaviour in order to successfully complete programming (Ellerby et al., 2010).

**1.5.4.6 Circles of support.** Restorative justice approaches of the Mennonite Church in Ontario, Canada, have spurred the creation of Community Reintegration Projects, also known as Circles of Support and Accountability (or COSA). The first ever COSA circle was informally set up in 1994 in Ontario and supported by CSC (Petrunik, 2002). COSA initiatives are aimed at high-risk sexual offenders released at the end of their sentence, as a means of facilitating the process of reintegration and desistance; targeted offenders are often those who are high profile, have long histories of offending, have typically failed in treatment, and are recently released on warrant expiry (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007; Heise et al., 2000; Wilson, Cortoni, & McWhinnie, 2009).

These circles consist of the core member (the ex-offender), and about four to six trained volunteers (usually from the church) assisted by professionals who are willing to help the core member in establishing themselves in the community and avoiding risky situations (Wilson et al., 2009). A circle typically has weekly meetings between volunteers and the core member, and frequent contacts between the individual volunteers and the core member, in order to support him in efforts to desist (Clarke, Brown, & Völlm, 2015; Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). Former offenders enter voluntarily and must agree to the terms of the circle. The COSA model is very flexible and may be adjusted to accommodate a variety of individual and cultural needs and concerns. COSA has grown substantially and proliferated across Canada, where there are over 100 circles (Petrunik et al., 2008). COSA circles are also an international movement and have extended into the U.S., UK, Europe, and other parts of the world (Clarke et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2009).

### **1.5.5 Evidence Regarding Efficacy of Sex Offender Policy**

Given that sexual offenders are not a homogenous group and have complex multifaceted needs, there is not a one-size fits all approach to managing these individuals; as a result all policies carry some degree of risk as well as inadvertent consequences (Lobonov-Rostovsky & Harris, 2016).

**1.5.5.1 Registration and community notification.** Some research has looked at the efficacy of sex offender registration and notification policies with disappointing results (Levenson, 2011). Most research to date does not provide supportive evidence for the use of sex offender registration and notification legislation to prevent sexual recidivism (Tewksbury & Jennings, 2010; Vasquez, Madden, & Walker, 2008; Zgoba, Witt, Dalessandro, & Veysey, 2008

etc.). Vasquez and colleagues (2008) investigated the impact of registration legislation on the incidence of forcible rapes across the U.S. through a time series analysis. They found that these laws did not have an observable or uniform impact on the number of reported rapes throughout the states they analyzed. Another study looking at the relationship between failure to register and recidivism found that failure to register convictions did not have a significant impact on sexual recidivism (Levenson, Letourneau, Armstrong, & Zgoba, 2010). Duwe and Donnay (2010) again found that having a current or prior failure to register conviction did not significantly increase one's risk of sexual re-offending.

Harris and colleagues (2010) investigated the effects of the three-tiered system of classifying offenders in the U.S., which came as a result of the AWA. They looked at the impact of this federal reclassification in two states (Ohio and Oklahoma) and found that there has been an increase in offenders classified in higher tiers, which suggests that at least half of offenders who are registered could be subject to lifetime registration. This 'widening the net' (Harris et al., 2010, p. 505) was noted to place extra and unnecessary burden on the justice system and contrary to the intention of the legislation which is to protect public safety, researchers suggested that it may make it even more challenging to discriminate among registered offenders. This broader reclassification was noted to be fiscally unwise and in contrast to the available research evidence which shows that only the minority of sex offenders reoffend and there is a limited group of offenders who are high risk (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005), rather than the majority.

In addition to lack of evidence in support of registration laws, researchers have found that information contained in U.S. registries is incomplete or inaccurate for a large proportion of sex offenders (Levenson & Cotter, 2005a). Meloy and colleagues (2007) indicated that these registries are ineffective because they are not comprehensive. This is a result of the fact that most sexual crimes are unreported, many sex offenders may not comply with requirements, plea bargains allow certain offenders to negotiate out of registering, and finally, this legislation focuses on offences with stranger victims, which are relatively rare (Meloy et al., 2007). Furthermore, it has been argued that recidivism is not significantly decreased because treatment is not a consideration under such policies (Zevitz & Farkas, 2000a). In Canada, there has yet to be any research conducted regarding the impact of the two sex offender registries (Murphy & Federoff, 2013). There is also currently no information regarding the actual performance of the

Canadian registry in terms of identifying and apprehending offenders sooner and/or decreasing recidivism (Murphy et al., 2009; Murphy & Federoff, 2013).

**1.5.5.2 Residence restrictions.** The majority of research to date that has investigated the impact of residence restrictions on recidivism suggests that this approach is ineffective at reducing recidivism (Galeste et al., 2012; Levenson, 2011). One study compared the recidivism rates of two matched sex offender groups and found that those who lived within 1000-2500 ft. of schools or daycares did not reoffend more frequently than those who lived further away. There was no significant correlation between sexual recidivism and the distance the offender lived from schools, and proximity was not a significant predictor of recidivism (Zandbergen, Levenson, & Hart, 2010). In Minnesota, researchers followed sex offenders who had been released and incarcerated for a new offense at least four years later and found that none of the newly committed sexual offences would have been prevented by the implementation of residential restrictions (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2007). Similarly, another study reviewing the impact of residence restrictions in the U.S. found that residential proximity did not predict recidivism (Nieto & Jung, 2006). Critics argue that residence restrictions may have the opposite effect and serve to increase sexual victimization. Sex offenders face the risk of homelessness which not only makes it more challenging for law enforcement to track them, but also creates environmental stressors that may trigger future offending (Galeste et al., 2012).

**1.5.5.3 Civil commitment.** Critics argue that U.S. civil commitment legislation punishes individuals who have already served their time and paid their debt to society, which has serious human rights implications (Petrunik et al., 2008). Researchers have noted that these detention centers are extremely costly (even more so than incarceration and treatment together) (Cohen & Jeglic, 2007). A follow-up study of offenders not committed despite the judgment of mental health professionals that they should be found that 70% did not reoffend. This finding suggests that the majority of civilly committed offenders may not reoffend even if released to the community (Schram & Milloy, 1998). Furthermore, although civil commitment was initially intended to facilitate the treatment of sex offenders in order to decrease their risk of recidivism upon their eventual release, the guidelines of the legislation can be stretched to simply confine offenders indeterminately (Levenson, 2003). Thus, although the intent of the policy is to treat offenders, there is much ambiguity as to this aspect of the policy and a lack of research investigating effectiveness of SVP legislation (Cohen & Jeglic, 2007). In Canada, 810 orders,

DO and LTO orders have not been evaluated in terms of effectiveness of reducing recidivism and cost effectiveness (Petrunik et al., 2008).

**1.5.5.4 EM/GPS evidence.** Although GPS monitoring is a relatively new way to monitor offenders, it has already been criticized. Some argue there is a lack of evidence supportive of GPS tracking over other sanctions, in order to reduce recidivism (Levenson & D'Amora, 2007). A pilot evaluation of a GPS program for high-risk sex offenders found that GPS monitoring had an at best marginal impact on parolee recidivism (Turner et al., 2007). Beyond the lack of support, there are several collateral consequences of this monitoring such as the fiscal burden on offenders who have to fund the technology and on the justice system, as well as the additional use of staffing resources and time required by probation officers (Armstrong & Freeman, 2011). A recent study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of GPS monitoring for high-risk sex offenders in California (Turner, Chamberlain, Jannetta & Hess, 2015) and findings were nuanced. Data was collected from 94 high-risk sex offenders monitored through GPS and 91 high risk offenders on specialized caseloads. Specifically, this study was conducted to compare the added value of the GPS technology to small specialized caseloads, rather than being a comparison to routine supervision. No significant differences were found in terms of overall recidivism rates, returns to custody, and violations in general, however GPS monitored offenders were less likely to fail to register and slightly less likely to abscond (Turner et al., 2015).

In Canada, EM was found to have no effect on recidivism in a 1999 comparison study completed with offenders in three provinces (Bonta et al., 1999). A 2009 evaluation of the Electronic Monitoring Pilot Program, which was launched in 2008 and involved federally sentenced offenders from Ontario deemed to be at low risk of re-offending found “an inconclusive rehabilitative impact” of EM (Oluto, Beaupre, & Verbrugge, 2010). This evaluation found that offenders themselves did not perceive that EM enhanced their accountability. They also concluded that the program has been unsuccessful at showing EM would be a deterrent, a correctional aid, or be a cost-effective way to bolster public safety (Oluto et al., 2010). Furthermore, EM can make reintegration more challenging, and electronic malfunctions and the physical size can add to stress experienced by offenders trying to reintegrate (John Howard Society of Alberta, 2000; Wilson, 2013). A recent review does not recommend the use of EM given the lack of empirical research supporting its effectiveness (Wilson, 2013).

**1.5.5.5 Drug therapy.** Researchers have not generally found compelling evidence for the use of libido reducing drug treatment in the reduction of sexual offending (Eher & Pfafflin, 2011) although there are some mixed results. One review conducted by White, Bradley, Ferriter and Hatzipetrou (2000) from the Cochrane Collaboration (considered widely as the gold standard review method) found a lack of evidence regarding the use of sex drive reduction pharmacotherapy. Only one study fit their inclusion criteria for their review and they concluded this treatment should be used with caution and should be considered experimental, with use only justified in the context of well-conducted clinical trials (White et al., 2000). Importantly, studies completed with humans have found that testosterone withdrawal does not impair penile erection, and it is vital to recognize that many sexual offences do not result in intercourse (Kutcher, 2010).

There has been some success in treating particular subsets of sex offenders with drug therapy, with additional psychotherapy also recommended for long term effectiveness (Del Busto & Harlow, 2011). Kim and colleagues (2016) completed a recent meta-analysis and found that chemical and surgical treatments were more effective than psychotherapeutic treatments at reducing sexual recidivism (although both types of treatments did reduce recidivism), however they noted that there are ethical concerns with using these methods and there is a reluctance to endorse them. Controversy exists around the use of libido reducing drug treatment, as it poses obvious ethical concerns regarding freedom of the individual. Critics argue that this legislation is coercive, and even if consent is provided, it cannot be considered truly free and informed consent under the circumstances in which it is given (Del Busto & Harlow, 2011; Harrison, 2008; Harrison & Rainey, 2011). Furthermore, these treatments have negative side effects such as: weight gain, breast enlargement, and most commonly, osteoporosis (Harrison & Rainey, 2011).

**1.5.5.6 Incarceration and longer prison terms.** Considerable research has been completed which has found that relying only on punitive measures, such as incarceration for example, will not lead to any significant changes in behaviour (Gendreau, Goggin, Cullen, & Andrews, 2000). There is a lack of empirical support related to the deterrent effect of incarceration on re-offending. One study, completed in Canada which included over 600 adult male sex offenders, found no relationship between incarceration and sexual recidivism (Nunes, Firestone, Wexler, Jensen, & Bradford, 2007).

Currently, there is little research that suggests that longer prison terms have an impact on recidivism. Of course, it is not trivial that longer imprisonment eliminates the likelihood of those particular offenders recidivating while so incarcerated, and therefore it can be reasonably argued that serving more time in institutions does have a community safety benefit (Lobonov-Rostovsky & Harris, 2016). However, these policies have a significant impact on the cost of incarceration (Centre for Sex Offender Management, 2008) and also may place an additional burden on victims in terms of a willingness to report given the severe consequences that may occur to their abuser, who is likely known to them (Lobonov-Rostovsky & Harris, 2016).

**1.5.5.7 Circles of support.** Research on restorative justice approaches such as COSA is promising and has shown that they are effective in helping to prevent sexual re-offending (Petrunik et al., 2008). Initial evaluation of the COSA model showed that offenders who were part of a circle had a 70% lower sexual recidivism rate than matched controls over a 54 month follow-up time (Wilson, Picheca, & Prinzo, 2005). Another evaluation again found that over a three year follow-up period, there were significantly fewer sexual recidivists in the COSA group, than there were in the control group of offenders released into the community. In this study the rate of sexual recidivism for the control group compared to the COSA group was 13.7% vs. 2.3%. These authors conclude that COSA research provides clear evidence that high-risk sex offenders can be managed successfully in the community (Wilson et al., 2009). A systematic review looking at the effectiveness of COSA outcomes was recently conducted and included 15 studies (Clarke et al., 2015). Data collected from Canada, U.S. and the UK suggested broadly speaking that participation in circles was associated with lower rates of recidivism, however there were few statistically significant differences in outcomes reported. These researchers noted that there were a number of methodological issues (e.g., a lack of randomized control trials, limited sample sizes, and shorter follow up etc.) associated with many of the studies, suggesting that the efficacy of COSAs has not yet been demonstrated adequately. Although a very promising beginning, long-term prospective research is required to continue to explore and evaluate COSA circles (Clarke et al., 2015).

Petrunik (2002) has indicated that these circles open up the possibility of both individual and community involvement in increasing desistance, where the offender, with the help of the community, has the opportunity to instill positive change while individual community members also assist by providing offenders with acceptance and help. According to Petrunik (2007), the

major impediments limiting future success of COSA initiatives are lack of funding and an inability to recruit sufficient volunteers given the intensive nature of the work and level of commitment.

**1.5.5.8 Sex offender treatment and RNR.** Researchers have investigated the impact of sex offender treatment on recidivism. Several meta-analytic studies suggest a positive effect of treatment on recidivism (Alexander, 1999; Hall, 1995; Lösel & Schmucker, 2005). For example, in their meta-analysis investigating treatment effects, Lösel and Schmucker (2005) found that the overall rates of recidivism for treated offenders was 12%, compared to 25% for the untreated comparison group, and that treatment non-completers were at a higher risk to reoffend. Others have questioned the empirical support for sex offender treatment. In their study, regarded as the first and only large randomized control trial (RCT) of sex offender treatment using a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or CBT and relapse prevention model of intervention with sex offenders, Marques, Wiederanders, Day, Nelson & van Ommeren (2005) concluded that sex offender treatment did not reduce recidivism over an 8-year follow-up period (Marques et al., 2005). Although this study found no differences in sexual recidivism among the treatment and control groups, some researchers have argued that there were significant methodological limitations (such as that the control/comparison group was a higher risk group than the treatment group) and have challenged Marques and colleagues' interpretation of the data (for a more detailed discussion please refer to Marshall & Marshall 2007; Marshall & Marshall, 2008).

Several review studies suggest that treatment is related to reductions in recidivism. For example, a meta analytic review summarizing data from 43 studies which included over 9450 sex offenders found that treated offenders reoffended considerably less than untreated controls (10 vs. 17%) over a median 46 month follow-up period (Hanson et al., 2002). A recent review article which updated the most recent meta-analyses of the effects of sex offender treatment by Kim and colleagues (2016) found a larger and more robust treatment effect than previous meta-analyses and specifically found that treatment resulted in a 22% reduction in recidivism. This study found that treatment is more successful with adolescents compared with adults, although treatment was effective for both groups. Furthermore, community based treatments were found to have a larger effect in reducing recidivism. Schmucker & Lösel (2015) completed a recent meta-analysis which again found a significant overall effect of treatment on recidivism rates, although in this study the mean effect size for sexual recidivism was smaller than in their 2005



review. They noted there were only a few randomized designs present and that cognitive-behavioural and multi-systemic treatment revealed better effects. They found that a mean effect was present for community treatment and not in-prison treatment, and they call for future evaluations designed to address the following questions: what works with whom, in what contexts, and under what conditions.

Although some researchers have called for more methodologically rigorous studies, including the use of more RCTs, before drawing any firm conclusions about treatment effectiveness (Langstrom et al., 2013), the current literature, despite its noted limitations, tentatively indicates a generally positive effect of treatment in reducing recidivism, and suggests that CBT treatments are the interventions of choice (Corabian, Dennett, & Harstall, 2011; Hall, 1995; Lösel & Schmucker, 2005). Therefore, on the balance of the substantive results of the reviewed literature, it is the author's position that sex offender treatment works for reducing sexual violence. More sound research regarding sex offender treatment is important, however Levenson and Prescott (2014) further suggest that "does treatment work" may not be the best question to ask, and rather the question should be "how does treatment work?" Future research should focus on content and process variables in effective treatment for sex offenders.

According to the literature, correctional interventions that are based on the principles of the RNR model are more effective in successfully rehabilitating and reintegrating offenders back into society (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006). A meta-analysis was conducted which found that treatment approaches that were individualized and RNR based were the most effective in sex offender treatment (Hanson, et al., 2009). This approach to managing offenders is related to lower rates of recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

### **1.5.6 Policy Summary**

In summary, the majority of current legislation in North America targeting sex offenders is generally punitive in nature and these punitive policies lack research evidence to support their effectiveness for reducing recidivism. The policies that have emerging evidence are those with a rehabilitation focus, including RNR based sex offender treatment and restorative justice approaches such as COSA. A criticism of current punitive sex offender policies, leveled by research experts and some politicians, is that policies are too broad and over inclusive (Leon, 2011; Meloy et al., 2013; Sample & Kadleck, 2008; Tofte & Fellner, 2007). Tewksbury and Mustaine (2012) indicated that given that there is little research evidence supporting the efficacy

of many current sex offender policies in the U.S., the wisdom of such practices must be questioned. Of course, empirical evidence is not the only determinant of public policy since, as the above review demonstrates, it is apparent that policy is often not based solely on research evidence. Thus, public, professional and victim attitudes towards particular policies are also worth examining.

## **1.6 Knowledge and Attitudes about Sex Offender Policy**

There is a growing body of research investigating public (including victims), professional, and policy makers' attitudes towards and views of sex offender policy. The majority of this research originates in the U.S. and will be reviewed along with relevant research from other countries including Canada, the UK, and New Zealand.

### **1.6.1 Public Attitudes and Demographic Differences**

Language plays a pivotal role in the way offenders are treated, and the effect of labeling goes beyond negative community/public attitudes. Although the term "sex offender" is intended as a neutral descriptor, the term itself is laden with negative connotations and stereotypical beliefs, and it has been found to impact one's level of support for particular sex offender policies. Researchers investigated the impact of the label 'sex offender' using a sample of over 1000 adult American citizens (Harris & Socia, 2014). They found that when this label was used, rather than more neutral phrasing such as "people who have committed crimes of a sexual nature" (pg. 8), responders were more certain in their support for various restrictive management policies; that is the label increased attitude certainty (Harris & Socia 2014). Shackley and colleagues (2013) also found that people who held more negative attitudes were more supportive of community notification policies, which have not been empirically supported.

Researchers compared perceptions of residence restrictions for drunk driving offenders versus sexual offenders and found that these restrictions were seen as more punitive for driving under the influence (DUI) offenders among a sample of 224 adults from Ohio (Levenson, Shields, & Singleton, 2014). Levenson and colleagues suggested the reason for this discrepancy in attitudes was as a result of the stereotyped view of sexual offenders and the myths associated with this offender group; people were able to distance themselves significantly from the sex offender group and see themselves as dissimilar, however, cognitive dissonance was created given the reality and familiarity of driving after having had a drink, leading respondents to be more sympathetic towards this group (Levenson et al., 2014).

The symbolic impact of sex offender policies may be just as important as the instrumental goal of reducing sexual offending and thus these laws may still hold value within the community (Sample, 2011; Koon-Magnin, 2015). Anderson and Sample (2008) surveyed Nebraskan citizens about their awareness and use of the state's sex offender registry. Although the large majority of respondents were aware of the online registry and reported it made them feel safe, over 66% of citizens had never accessed the registry and had no intention of doing so. Years later, Sample, Evans, and colleagues (2011) surveyed the Nebraska public regarding the instrumental functions of sex offender notification policy and found that the majority of residents had never accessed the registry and reported no interest in the information.

Levenson and colleagues (2007) found that members of the public were largely unaware of notification policies (or SORN) yet still claimed such policies were successful in reducing sexual abuse, despite sufficient evidence to rebut this conclusion. These authors also found that over 75% of the public they surveyed believed that sex offenders should be subject to public identification, regardless of their risk level (Levenson et al., 2007). Koon-Magnin (2015) recently tested Levenson and colleagues' (2007) conclusions with a U.S. sample using an experimental design looking at whether or not the public would support legislation that was not supported by scientific evidence. Half of participants were provided with a stimulus regarding the lack of efficacy of SORN policies prior to being surveyed; it was hypothesized that those who were provided the prompt would perceive SORN policies to have less of an instrumental purpose. Results indicate that support for SORN was high despite the experimental prompt, suggesting that the laws have a great symbolic value (Koon-Magnin, 2015). This unfounded support for more punitive approaches to sex offender management can obviously create major barriers for sex offenders in terms of reintegrating and trying to follow a path of desistance (Willis et al., 2010). This recent study suggests that the public still values policies without and despite any evidence of their instrumental impact, and it will take more convincing that the current policies are ineffective.

Another study examined how community members felt about the effectiveness of housing and notification policies, such as Megan's Law, for sex offenders in the U.S. (Schiavone & Jeglic, 2009). Over 40% of the sample felt that notification laws were helpful in preventing offending, however the majority did not feel that recidivism rates were impacted by Megan's Law. Although much of the sample agreed that notification and housing policies were fair, they

were not necessarily convinced that these policies were effective in reducing recidivism. Furthermore, most of the sample was quite unsympathetic towards the negative impact of residence restrictions on sex offenders. The majority agreed that it was fair that due to housing restrictions some sex offenders are unable to return to their previous homes, and are unable to live with supportive family members. It is curious that a majority of people support such policy despite the fact that they target the least likely scenarios - stranger perpetrators or nonrelated victim offender dynamics (Schiavone & Jeglic, 2009). This suggests notification laws have symbolic function but limited applied or instrumental function, that is, these laws have limited impact on the behaviour of citizens (Anderson & Sample, 2008; Sample et al., 2011). Researchers have suggested that beginning a discussion with the public about the symbolic value of these policies and the lack of instrumental benefit is warranted and may serve to alter support for certain policies (Koon-Magnin, 2015).

Mears, Mancini, Gertz, and Bratton (2008) conducted a telephone survey of a sample of Americans ( $n = 425$ ) asking their views on sex crime policy for different types of sex offenders. Results found that an overwhelming majority supported the use of public registries and 75% supported residence restrictions. Respondents did report differing degrees of support for various sanctions for different sexual crimes. For example, while 94% of the sample thought jail time was the most appropriate sanction for the crime of rape, and 97% for child related sexual offences, only 46% of the sample thought it would be the best response for offenders convicted of indecent exposure. Kernsmith and colleagues (2009) found that the public indicated the greatest amount of agreement for sex offender registration requirements for sex offenders with child victims. In a recent study by King and Roberts (2015), public attitudes towards sex offender rehabilitation were again found to be more complex and nuanced. Using multistage cluster sampling these researchers provided online and mail surveys to 174 Pennsylvania residents. The survey included vignettes describing five different sexual offences (voyeurism, exhibitionism, fondling, sexual assault, and rape), which had randomly varying scenario characteristics (including victim sex, victim age, offender age, victim-offender relationship). Participants were asked to recommend the prison term and registration requirement for each of the five vignettes. Participants had more punitive attitudes; that is they suggested longer sentences and registration requirements, in vignettes involving more serious offences, with older male offenders and younger victims. The authors noted that these findings suggest that there are

discrepancies between public opinion, which is more nuanced and varied, and current state policies about offender registration and management, which is more restrictive and applied very broadly (King & Roberts, 2015).

McCartan (2013) conducted a pilot study using locally representative focus groups with 35 members of the public in Wales and Northern Ireland and investigated public attitudes about disclosure of sex offender information. Results indicated that the public felt they had the right to access information regarding former offenders. However, the public was generally not informed about sex offender management strategies that were being used in their respective countries. Another main issue identified by the study was the fact that the public mistrusted the state and police and felt that they could be better informed. McCartan (2013) concluded that the government should engage the public more about sexual violence. Although this was a small pilot study and conducted in two European countries, the results are likely not unique and it is possible and somewhat likely, that much of the public in other countries, including Canada, would benefit from more engagement on this topic.

Research was conducted to identify public attitudes towards EM of sex offenders and data from a telephone survey of over 700 Americans suggested that particular demographic variables were associated with support for GPS monitoring (Button, Tewskbury, Mustaine, & Paine, 2013). Results indicated that women viewed GPS monitoring significantly more positively than men. These researchers also found that those who lived in closest proximity to sex offenders did not view EM policies favorably compared to those who were farther away; as a result, there was a lack of support for EM use in the areas with the most vulnerable groups of people (Button et al., 2013). This suggests that legislators need to gain a better understanding of what policies are effective in improving the safety of those at highest risk (Button et al., 2013).

U.S. based researchers Mears and colleagues (2008) also found that being white, male, less educated, less wealthy, and more concerned about crime, was associated with endorsement of more severe punishments. Neither marital status nor political orientation were statistically significant predictors of policy endorsement. Although the sample did support severe punishments for sex offenders, nearly half (49%) was also willing to pay additional taxes in order to support sex offender treatment; for instance, 22% of the sample was supportive of a \$25 increase in taxes to go towards sex offender treatment and 13% were supportive of a \$100 increase. This suggests that the public does have some faith in rehabilitation. This mixed

support of both rehabilitative and punitive treatments is not uncommon and reflects an important and practical desire to have multiple strategies that address sexual crimes (Mears et al., 2008).

Researchers have consistently found that attitudes are complex and multifaceted (Brown, 1999; Brown et al., 2008; Willis et al., 2010). Brown (1999) used a postal questionnaire to survey over 300 randomly selected Cardiff, Wales area residents about their attitudes towards treatment of sex offenders. While the majority of the sample thought that treatment should be part of a sex offender's sentence, almost 90% of the sample also believed that mandatory treatment should not be the only consequence, and that punishment should also occur. Although, in general, the sample was supportive of treatment, over 60% were not in favor of having a treatment center located within their own communities, and the majority of this subgroup indicated they would be prepared to take action to ensure this did not happen. Furthermore, the majority also indicated that they would not employ or rent to a known sex offender who had completed their sentence. Also of note, responses varied by certain demographic characteristics, with younger individuals and those who worked in more skilled positions, such as professionals, managerial and technical occupations (considered higher social economic status), were more likely to support rehabilitative methods of sex offender management. The results of this study suggest that attitudes towards societal-level and personal-level actions may vary considerably (Brown, 1999).

In a larger study years later, Brown and colleagues (2008) surveyed over 900 UK members of the public. Their sample was in favor of sex offenders receiving additional support on release and indicated a tolerance, to a certain extent, of offender resettlement in the community. The public were supportive of treatment for offenders in the community, but were not willing to actively support sexual offenders residing in their neighborhoods; almost 95% of those surveyed indicated they would not rent housing to a sex offender and 70% indicated they would not hire sex offenders in their business (Brown et al., 2008). Brown and colleagues found that attitudes towards offender reintegration differed as a result of age, gender, and parental status, but attitudes did not vary with marital status. They found that people with children, women, and persons aged 35-55, were the most likely to hold more conservative views towards sex offender reintegration. Persons aged 16 to 35 were the most likely to hold liberal views towards reintegration. In terms of occupation, professionals tended to be most liberal, students held more moderate views, and manual workers were the most illiberal (Brown et al., 2008).

The manner in which sex offenders are discussed and labeled, especially in headline media stories, often includes dehumanizing language (such as monsters, and animals) which has been found to be related to members of the public expressing more punitive attitudes, support for longer sentences and expressing less support for rehabilitation of sex offenders (Viki, Fullerton, Raggett, Tait, & Wiltshire, 2012). These researchers also found that positive contact with sex offenders (for example professionals who work with them as oppose to the public who has minimal contact) was related to less dehumanization of this group.

### **1.6.2 Professionals and Policy Makers' Attitudes**

Research on professional and policy makers' attitudes on sex offender policy has primarily been conducted in the U.S. Call and Gordon (2016) surveyed two professional samples in the U.S., clinical specialists and criminal justice professionals, on their attitudes towards SORN and residence restrictions. Results indicated that support for these policies was significantly higher for the criminal justice professionals. The differences between groups may be a result of how these groups interact with sex offenders and the role they play in the lives of sex offenders, given that one group is usually involved in providing treatment. Overall results indicated that both groups had low levels of support for current policy which, the authors noted, should discourage policy makers from these more traditional deterrence management strategies (Call & Gordon, 2016).

Another U.S. study surveyed professionals ( $n = 261$ ) on their opinions of sex offender notification laws. These researchers found that the majority of professionals believed that community notification was not effective in reducing re-offending, but half of the sample felt that offenders should be subject to the disclosure (Levenson, Fortney, & Baker, 2010). This study highlights the fact that there is still some ambivalence on the part of professionals regarding these policies even though they believe that the policies are ineffective. The finding that many professionals still support these policies is notable because other studies have found that professionals recognize potential negative consequences as well. For example, Malesky and Keim (2001) found that 60% of professionals surveyed believed that offenders who are subject to community notification will become targets of vigilantism in their communities, and over 80% of professionals surveyed did not believe that public registries would affect the rate of re-offending.

Sample and Kadleck (2008) examined the thoughts and opinions of 35 policy makers in Illinois, due to the unprecedented amount of sex offender legislation initiated in Illinois during

the 1990's. All identities of participants were concealed, but respondents were still hesitant to disclose their personal beliefs, especially if they did not agree with the public or agency expectations. The majority of the sample indicated there was a growing sex offender problem and that little could be done to prevent sex offenders from re-offending. Only a minority (four) of legislators were confident that current laws suppress sexual offending; however, almost unanimously, public officials agreed that the current legislation is effective in addressing the public's demand for action. The findings of this study illustrate the fact that criminal justice policies may be enacted as a result of several factors, including public perception, media coverage, and policy makers' own personal assumptions (Sample & Kadleck, 2008).

A more recent study asked over 60 legislators across the U.S. about their knowledge and perceptions of sex offender legislation in their respective jurisdictions (Meloy et al., 2013). The majority of policy makers agreed that the main purpose for sex offender legislation was to increase public safety. Over half of respondents agreed that these laws were achieving their goals as intended and over 65% agreed that such policies played a crucial role in future deterrence of sexual crimes. Interestingly, almost 20% stated that the efficacy of their particular state's sex offender laws was simply unknown and nearly 90% indicated at least one serious negative consequence of these policies. In general, policy makers agreed that sex offender legislation was needed to keep offenders from re-offending and that sex offender therapy would be less effective than targeted sex offender laws in reducing recidivism. The authors concluded that given their findings, it is important for policy makers to be more educated on the research regarding sexual violence and offending (Meloy et al., 2013).

### **1.6.3 Victim Attitudes**

There is limited research that has specifically focused on how victims of sexual crimes view particular sex offender management strategies. Importantly, in speaking with victims of sexual violence and advocacy agencies in the U.S., victims were critical of new more punitive sex offender policy. Victims reported that tougher penalties for persons convicted of sexual crimes may make it even more challenging to report these crimes (Bandy, 2014). This is a result of the fact that most people are known to their abusers. Furthermore, beyond the individual offender, the victim must also consider how the extended family and social circle would react to the reporting. The deepening of consequences for sex offenders and conflicting emotions and



loyalties a victim experiences causes increased uncertainty in whether or not one should report the victimization or remain quiet (Bandy, 2014).

Interestingly, victims reported that the best way that policies can serve victims and assist and prevent further victimization would include providing an open channel of communication about victimization and victim experiences, encouraging the dissemination of accurate and far-reaching sexual prevention education, and funding access to services (both short and long term) which assist victims and offenders (Bandy, 2014).

#### **1.6.4 NIMBY**

A further complicating factor when considering attitudes towards sex offender policy is the ‘not in my backyard’ phenomenon or NIMBY. This phenomenon (while not confined to sex offenders) can be simply the mentality that one does not want to interact in any way with sex offenders and/or the fact that many people may endorse a certain general attitude towards sex offenders, however it may not translate in an applied sense and reflect in one’s behaviour (Brown, 2009). For example, although someone may recognize a need for and support for sex offender rehabilitation generally, when asked specifically, they would not support a community based treatment facility being built in their own neighborhood (e.g., see Brown, 1999; Brown et al., 2008). This suggests there is a divide between attitudes on an individual level and abstract policy level. Certain sex offender policies, such as residence restriction legislation, have taken the NIMBY phenomenon to a greater extreme and essentially banned sex offenders from living in major urban centers as a result of their restrictions (Bonnar-Kidd, 2010; Levenson & Cotter, 2005b). Therefore, NIMBY is relevant in terms of consequences related to the rehabilitative ideal; if sex offenders are unable to live prosocial lives in the community, their rehabilitative capability is not met (Brown, 2009).

As the above literature indicates, there is political will and public desire for sex offender policy, however many policies, and especially those which are solely punitive and broadly imposed, are not effective in reducing recidivism. There is a need to find a way to combine this desire for punishment with empirically supported effective policies in order to decrease sexual re-offending and increase public safety. Beyond research regarding attitudes towards and knowledge of sex offender policy, it is important to turn next to research findings related to the impact of such policy on sex offenders themselves.

### **1.7 Policy Impact on Sex Offenders**

Some recent studies, mainly conducted in the U.S., have explored the impact of sex offender policies, such as sex offender registries, community notification and residence restriction laws on sex offenders themselves. Levenson and Cotter (2005a) surveyed over 180 sex offenders in Florida and found that most offenders felt that public disclosure of personal information was unfair. Over half of the sample indicated that the information included on the Internet registry was incorrect however it was unclear how significant these inaccuracies were or which pieces of information were incorrect. The majority of the sex offenders reported experiencing hopelessness, shame and embarrassment, and stress that interfered with their recovery as a result of notification. Another study found that sex offenders ostracized by angry community members have experienced significant stress, depression, relationship problems, employment difficulties, and persistent feelings of stigma and vulnerability, which could affect their ability to function successfully in the community and desist from offending (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006).

Research has indicated that sex offenders suffer serious social and economic consequences as a result of being on sex offender registries (Levenson & D'Amora, 2007). One study that surveyed 121 registered sex offenders found that nearly half (47%) reported being harassed in person, over half reported loss of a friend as a result of registration, 43% reported job loss, and 45% reported loss or denial of a place to live (Tewksbury, 2005). A Wisconsin study regarding notification laws found that the majority of sex offenders reported experiencing difficulties with employment, oftentimes losing a job because of risk status, and struggled with housing as they dealt with being continuously pushed out of neighborhoods by their communities (Zevitz & Farkas, 2000b). Similarly, other researchers who surveyed 137 registered sex offenders in New Jersey found that the majority reported that notification laws increased the stress they experienced in their lives (Mercado, Alvarez, & Levenson, 2008). As a result of notification, over half of the sample reported having lost their job, and nearly half reported having been physically harassed or threatened (Mercado et al., 2008).

A recent qualitative study involving 60 registered sex offenders in three U.S. states found that offenders experienced negative emotions including anger and despair and collateral consequences as a result of having to register, and many experienced increased levels of depression and hopelessness (Ackerman, Sacks, & Osier, 2013). Respondents reported it was

unfair to be subject to lifetime registration and felt it was overly punitive as well as ineffective in terms of preventing sexual re-offending. Notably, one study even found that registered sex offenders see potential for registration legislation to reduce re-offending, however they have serious concerns about the efficacy and widespread application of such laws (Tewksbury & Lees, 2007). Registration and notification policies may actually increase recidivism by stigmatizing, isolating, and alienating offenders in the community (Schiavone & Jeglic, 2008; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006).

Less research on this topic has been conducted in Canada, and as discussed above, registration and notification is separate in Canada. Recently Murphy and Federoff (2013) surveyed 30 registered sex offenders about their experiences on either the OSOR or NSOR using an open-ended question format. Over 60% of the sample reported that being on the registry was not onerous, and over half of the sample reported that being on the registry had little no impact in their ability to successfully reintegrate into the community. These results reveal a significant difference in the impact of registration on U.S. and Canadian sex offenders. It is possible that Canadian offenders had fewer negative experiences given that Canadian registries are not public. Particular concerns were noted about the frequency and inconsistency of policy drop ins (completed in order to ensure compliance with the registry), which sometimes were made by plain clothed officers, and other times were completed with fully uniformed officers which was much less discreet and caused anxiety on the part of some participants. The major problem reported about the registry was in regards to the extended length of reporting time, which was seen as a barrier to successfully moving forward and desisting. Importantly, when asked about public registries 64% of the sample indicated that this would negatively impact their risk, making them more likely to recidivate; they also felt that publicizing the information would force offenders in general to go underground (Murphy & Federoff, 2013).

In examining the impact of residence restrictions on sex offenders, Levenson and Cotter (2005b) found that these restrictions increased an offender's sense of isolation, increased their stress and triggers associated with recidivism, effected their financial and emotional well-being and decreased their chance to live a stable life. Sex offenders also perceived that residence restrictions prohibited them from supportive contact with their families, who may live within the restriction zone (Levenson & Cotter, 2005b). Another study surveyed over 100 sex offenders in Florida about residence restrictions (Levenson, 2008). Results indicated that restrictions forced

offenders to live further from employment opportunities, support systems, treatment services, and public transport, as well as resulted in increased transience and instability. Such restrictions impacted younger offenders more detrimentally and many experienced more homelessness and transience as a result of having to comply with buffer zones. It is likely that residence restrictions serve to aggravate risk for this subgroup of sex offenders (Levenson, 2008), which due to their age are at higher risk to reoffend (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004). Tewksbury and Mustaine (2009) found that residential restriction laws have produced communities throughout the U.S. that effectively contain no available housing for registered sex offenders. Offenders are thereby forced to relocate and may be separated from positive social supports, including family and friends.

Beyond sex offenders themselves, their families and associates are also impacted by various policies. Levenson and Tewksbury (2009) surveyed almost 600 family members of registered sex offenders (RSO). They found that a considerable amount of family members experienced negative consequences as a result of registration and notification laws. Financial problems were noted for the majority of the sample as a result of employment problems for their registered family member, and just under one quarter reported having to move due to notification. Almost half reported that they have been threatened or harassed by neighbors, and this was significantly more likely for family who lived with an RSO. Children of RSOs experienced stigmatization and a myriad psychological issues, and even family members who did not live with an RSO experienced harassment, threats, violence, economic trouble and psychological stress. Given the broad and extended impact of sex offender registration and notification laws, they may ultimately result in loved ones distancing themselves from the registered offender, and therefore result in fewer sources of prosocial support (both economically and socially) for the offender (Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009). This is a concern that is risk relevant, as a lack of positive social supports is a well-established criminal risk factor. Given these results, it may be time to reconsider the broad implementation of certain policy.

### **1.8 Overall Policy and Policy Impact Conclusions**

In conclusion, particularly punitive sex offender policies have wide-ranging and often unintended consequences. In fact, more restrictive and punitive policies have been shown to negatively impact an offender's ability to find housing, employment, and positive social support, which are all factors associated with an increased risk for recidivism. Not only does research

cast doubt on the effectiveness of policies such as notification, registries, and residence restrictions in terms of controlling the risk of sex offenders, but there is also evidence of both financial and human costs associated with such policies; these policies may actually be making societies less safe (Galeste et al., 2012). Thus, in many cases particular policies appear likely to do more harm than good in protecting the public given their detrimental impact on the reintegration of sex offenders.

Indeed, the process of enacting such legislation, such as the Canadian government's Safe Streets and Community Act, appears to rely very little on research evidence, as Barbaree and colleagues (2012) outline in their submission to the Canadian senate. Against this political backdrop, examining the Canadian public's attitudes towards sexual offenders and related policy is a crucial step towards more effective policies which will better enhance public safety and reduce recidivism. Negative public attitudes towards sex offenders, or a lack of support for specific policies, may translate into an unwillingness to support their return to the community and to provide them access to resources required for successful reintegration (e.g., housing, employment, and social support).

Although it has been argued that current sex offender policy is justified at least partially by the fact that the public demands or supports stricter responses to sex offenders, this is merely an assumption (Payne et al., 2010). Mears and colleagues (2008) indicate that research on public views on sex offender policy is lacking. This information may help inform policy makers, make them accountable to the public, and ensure that policies reflect public interest and need. The attitudes and opinions of public stakeholders are essential to the development of workable sex offender policies. In fact, insofar as connections to the community are important to desistance (i.e., through employment, housing, relationships, etc.), community members are the final gatekeepers to many positive risk-relevant opportunities.

## CHAPTER 2: The Present Research

### 2.1 Rationale

Having described large bodies of diverse research in Chapter 1, further critical reflection is warranted to provide the reader with a clear sense of the justification for, and goals of, the current research. The existing literature described above, derived from a number of related fields of research, has addressed and answered a number of important questions. For instance, researchers have: 1) investigated and identified risk factors that are associated with recidivism and important to effective reintegration (e.g., Hanson & Harris, 2004); 2) surveyed and described attitudes towards sex offenders (e.g., Harper & Hogue, 2015; Levenson et al., 2007; Willis et al., 2013); and 3) examined the efficacy and impact of diverse sex offender policy, including the impact of punitive and rehabilitative legislation (e.g., Petrunik et al., 2008; Tewksbury & Jennings, 2010; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2012; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000a).

On the other hand, although each of these research foci have generated valuable data and insights while pursued in isolation, there is a dearth of research that integrates the knowledge of different fields. The current program of research was designed to bridge this gap and provide a more complete understanding of the interrelationships between sexual offending risk factors, public attitudes, and effective policy. There is a lack of research that has investigated current sex offender management strategies and public attitudes, especially in Canada. This is an important omission, when one considers both the goals and the mechanisms of change associated with potential sex offender policies. In order to make informed decisions about which sex offender policies could reduce sexual reoffending in practice, two elements must be considered. Firstly, it is important that there exists at least emerging evidence for the ability of such policy to reduce sexual violence. Secondly, given that the public is a necessary component in the effective implementation of these policies in practice, it is important to have an understanding of what policies the public supports. For example, efforts to provide sex offenders with job training might fail to make a meaningful impact on recidivism if members of the public refuse to employ them. Thus, additional knowledge about attitudes, combined with existing research on risk and sex offender policy, can hopefully assist policy makers in determining how to select and implement the most effective policies.

Furthermore, the available research on attitudes towards sex offenders, which has been conducted mainly in the U.S., has primarily defined sex offenders as a homogenous group (e.g.,

Brown et al., 2008; Olver & Barlow, 2010) and fewer studies focus on differences between sex offender types (e.g., Kernsmith et al., 2009; Mears et al., 2008). This research will contribute to the limited but growing Canadian literature on this topic and explore attitudes towards three types of sex offenders. Additionally, the bulk of the previous research does not assess the three domains of attitudes (cognitive, affective, behavioural), whereas the current research provides a rich understanding of Canadian attitudes through the assessment of the three attitudinal domains. Researchers have found that public perception has an impact on policy formation (Sample & Kadleck, 2008), and thus it is important to understand the public's input. It is hoped that a more detailed exploration of attitudes will provide a greater understanding of the factors that might influence or impede effective policy development.

## **2.2 Purpose and Research Objectives**

The current program of research was designed to assess attitudes of the Canadian public towards sex offenders, sex offender treatment, and sex offender policy. As noted earlier, sex offenders are a heterogeneous group. The current study considered attitudes towards three different types of adult sex offenders: contact offenders with adult victims, contact offenders with child victims, and non-contact adult offenders (see below in Methodology section for definition of each type of sex offender).

This research had the following main objectives:

- 1) Measurement of attitudes towards sex offenders
  - a) Identify public attitudes towards sex offenders in a comprehensive manner including measures of cognitive, affective and behavioural domains using a variety of tools, namely the Attitudes Towards Treatment of Sex Offenders (ATTSO) scale (Wnuk et al., 2006), the Attitudes towards Sex Offenders and the Criminal Justice System (ATSOCJS) scale (Olver & Barlow, 2010), a feeling thermometer (FT), and the Social Distance Scale (SDS) (Willis et al., 2013).
  - b) Identify if these tools are reliable and valid measures of attitudes
- 2) Sex offender policy endorsement
  - a) Identify what sex offender policies Canadians' endorse using a newly created Sex Offender Policy (SOP) questionnaire created for the current study. This scale included a variety of policies, both incapacitation/control (IC) oriented, and

rehabilitation/reintegration (RR) oriented, with many policies included which are currently in use in Canada

b) Explore the psychometric properties of this newly developed policy scale

3) Relationships among study factors

a) Identify the relationship between attitude measures, and between attitude measures and policy endorsement

b) Identify the relationship between demographic variables and particularly attitudes and policy endorsement;

4) Investigate predictor-criterion relationships of policy endorsement

a) Identify if certain demographic variables and/or attitudes are associated with policy endorsement

b) Identify if attitudes are associated with policy endorsement beyond demographic variables, and finally,

5) Identify if attitudes as assessed by the various measures and policy endorsement, as well as the relationships between attitudes, demographic variables and policy endorsement, differed as a result of sex offender type.

These research objectives were addressed through two studies. Study 1 was a pilot study conducted on a university student sample. Study 2 was completed using a large sample of English speaking Canadians, and was, with only a few exceptions, methodologically identical to the first study. Research questions and hypotheses therefore were identical for both studies with the exception of items 3 and 6 (which was not evaluated in the pilot study, for reasons discussed below). Given that this research is exploratory in nature, some of the following research questions were posed more generally and some were further broken down from the previously stated objectives.

### **2.2.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses**

1. What are the psychometric properties of the attitude scales, namely the: ATTSO, the ATSOCJS, and the SDS?

a) It is hypothesized that response patterns associated with the ATTSO and the ATSOCJS will reflect three factors (Incapacitation, Treatment ineffectiveness, and Mandated Treatment) and two components (systems attitudes, and rehabilitative attitudes), respectively.



- b) It is hypothesized that the three scales will all demonstrate good internal consistency.
2. What are Canadian attitudes towards sex offenders and sex offender treatment as measured by the four scales, which measure the three attitude components (affective, cognitive and behavioural)? What are the relationships among these attitude measures?
- It is hypothesized that Canadians will have negative affective attitudes towards sex offenders, as has been found in prior research (e.g., Malinen et al., 2014). It is hypothesized that scores on these various measures will be significantly positively related to one another, as they are intended to measure different components of attitudes towards sex offenders and sex offender treatment.
3. Do Canadian attitudes as measured by these scales vary based on sex offender type?
- Attitudes towards contact child offenders were hypothesized to be the most negative, compared to the public's attitudes towards contact adult offenders, and non-contact offenders, respectively. This result would be in keeping with research by Kernsmith and colleagues (2009) who found that the public was most fearful of offenders with child victims, followed by offenders with adult victims, and given this finding, it is likely that attitudes towards this group would be the most negative.
4. What are the psychometric properties of the SOP survey?
- Response patterns associated with the policy questionnaire were hypothesized to reflect two components: incapacitation/control policy, and rehabilitation/reintegration policy, which are hypothesized to both have adequate scale score reliability.
5. What sex offender policies do Canadians support? Does the public support more incapacitation/control (IC) or rehabilitative/reintegration (RR) based policies?
- It was hypothesized that Canadians will endorse support for both punitive and rehabilitative policies. This is in keeping with previous research that indicates the public is in support of punitive policies to manage sex offenders (e.g., Levenson et al., 2007; Brown, 1999) but also that when provided with both punitive and rehabilitative approaches to sex offender management, people support a combination of approaches (e.g., Brown et al., 2008).

6. Does policy endorsement vary based on sex offender type?

Members of the public that are instructed to answer questions related to contact offenders who offended against children are hypothesized to endorse more support for incapacitation/control based policies, followed by those instructed to answer questions related to contact offenders who offend against adults, and questions related to non-contact sex offenders, respectively. Research has found that the public does discriminate among sex offender types and does vary in their support for various sanctions (i.e., jail time) depending on the type of sex offence committed (King & Roberts, 2015; Mears et al., 2008). Also, research has shown that the public are most fearful of and most supportive of registration requirements for sex offenders with child victims (Kernsmith et al., 2009).

7. Is there a relationship between public attitudes towards sex offenders and policy endorsement? Are certain attitudes associated with endorsement of certain policy?

Given that past research has found that persons with more negative attitudes towards sex offenders were more supportive of community notification (an incapacitation/control policy) (Shackley et al., 2013), it is hypothesized that people with more negative attitudes towards sex offenders and sex offender treatment are more likely to endorse more support for incapacitation/control policies. Conversely, those with more positive attitudes are hypothesized to endorse more support for rehabilitation/reintegration based policies.

8. Do attitudes toward sex offenders and sex offender treatment, and policy endorsement vary as a function of demographic characteristics? Are particular demographic variables (such as gender, marital status, political orientation, etc.) associated with the type of policies one endorses?

Previous research has not found consistent patterns, although some researchers have found that women, and those with less education held less liberal views towards sex offender reintegration (e.g., Brown et al., 2008; Shackley et al., 2013; Willis et al., 2013). In addition, researchers have found that women are more likely than men to overestimate sexual recidivism rates (Brown et al., 2008; Olver & Barlow, 2010). Given these prior findings, it is hypothesized that men, persons with a more liberal political orientation, with more education, and who have had

more direct contact with sex offenders (either through work or personal relationships) will have more positive attitudes and endorse more RR policy. That is, women, those with a more conservative political orientation, with less education, and who have less direct contact with sex offenders will have more negative attitudes and endorse more IC based policy.

9. What are the predictor-criterion relationships between attitudes, demographic variables and policy endorsement? Beyond demographic variables, are attitudes towards sex offenders and sex offender treatment associated with RR and IC based policy endorsement? What is the best fitting model? Does this vary by sex offender type?

### **2.2.2 Overview of Analysis**

All data analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS version 20 published in 2011. The data were screened for potential problems with missing values. Missing data among participants was minimal (< 5%). Data were analyzed with missing cases (pairwise comparison).

**2.2.2.1 Data analytic plan.** Several of the research questions although separately posed above, were examined using the same statistical procedures, and thus will be grouped together below.

- A) Scale properties, reliability and relationship among measures (research questions 1, 2, 4):  
The psychometric properties of the tools were determined by computing: i) exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the ATTSO scale and Principal Components Analysis (PCA) for the ATSOCJS and SOP scales. PCA was completed on the SOP scale as a data reduction strategy to guide item groupings into coherent components to facilitate interpretation. Internal consistency of this scale was aided by using a loading criteria of .32 for items onto each component; ii) examination of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. Cronbach's Alpha is used as a measure of internal consistency, which is a function of the average inter-correlation of items in a survey instrument in order to gauge reliability. Alpha coefficients range from 0-1 and according to Field (2009),  $\alpha = .70$  and above is considered acceptable,  $\alpha = .80-.90$  represents a good measure of internal consistency, and,  $\alpha = .90$  or above represents excellent internal consistency; and iii) Pearson correlations were also computed between the subscale and total scores on all measures.
- B) Canadian Attitudes and Policy endorsement (research questions 2 and 5): descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and individual item analyses were computed for

each attitude scale and the SOP scale. SOP scale items were also recoded as binary items (endorse versus not endorsed) and these scores were added up and compared in order to identify how many of each type of policy was endorsed; these scores were compared and contrasted.

- C) Do attitudes and policy endorsement vary by sex offender type (research questions 3 and 6): ANOVAs and post hoc Tukey's-*b* tests were completed in order to identify if there were any significant differences among scores on the three versions and if so, which groups were significantly different. Overall patterns of responding on the three versions were compared with one another in order to identify if attitudes and policy endorsement varied with type of sex offender. Cohen's *d* effect sizes are presented to illustrate magnitude of the differences between survey versions, where  $d = .20$  is a small effect,  $d = .50$  is a medium effect, and  $d = .80$  is a large effect (Cohen, 1992).
- D) Attitude towards sex offenders and policy endorsement (research question 7):  
Correlation and multiple regression analyses were completed to investigate predictor-criterion relationships between attitudes towards sex offenders and sex offender treatment and support for given policies.
- a. Individual item, component, and aggregate total scores on the policy questionnaire will be correlated with dimensional scores (component and total) from the attitude measures.
  - b. The best fitting linear combination of attitude predictors (at the item and component level) will be examined via regression to examine predictor-criterion relationships of RR or IC based policy endorsement.
- E) Demographics, attitudes towards sex offenders, and policy endorsement (research question 8 and 9): Bivariate comparisons will be conducted to examine potential differences on attitudes toward sex offenders and their treatment and potential sex offender policy on demographic variables that include age, race, gender, political affiliation, socio-economic status, and occupation. This involved t-tests (for categorical predictors) and correlations for continuous predictors.  
Moderator analyses was conducted to examine whether key demographic characteristics (e.g., age, education), known and demonstrated to covary with such attitudes, are differentially associated with endorsement for certain policies. Specifically hierarchical

regression models will be fitted examining a combination of demographic and attitude variables to determine which are incremental and impact the relationships of others.

Note: In interpreting the effect size of correlation coefficients between continuous variables throughout the document, Cohen's (1992) criteria was used, where  $r = .10$  is small,  $r = .30$  is medium, and  $r = .50$  is a large effect.

## **2.3 General Methodology**

In this section methodological considerations which are common to both studies including instruments and overall procedure are outlined. This section will be followed by separate Chapters describing Study 1 and 2 which will specify any differences and include demographic characteristics of each sample as well as methodological procedures specific to each study.

### **2.3.1 Data Collection**

According to Dillman (2007), the use of the telephone interview paradigm may have become less effective more recently, as the majority of phones are unlisted and call blocking devices, caller ID and voicemail services are widely used. These new advances as well as the ever-increasing popularity of the personal computer, limit the utility of telephone survey methods. It is important to look to other feasible methods such as Internet based surveys, as was done in the current study.

**2.3.1.1 Internet surveys.** Web based surveys have been used for a variety of purposes including collecting demographic information, gathering opinion data, and for marketing purposes (Alvarez & VanBeselaere, 2005). These surveys are becoming a more popular and accepted method of data collection in diverse research areas (Dillman et al., 2001).

Internet access is very common among Canadians and 83% of Canadian households had home Internet access as captured by the 2012 Canadian Internet Use Survey (Statistics Canada, 2013). According to Elections Canada, 86% of eligible voters who voted in the last federal election had personal access to the Internet in their home, a number which continues to be on the rise. Also, as of 2011, legislation allowing for various forms of electronic voting (including Internet voting) was passed in 6 Canadian provinces (Laronde, 2012). Given these statistics, which are indicative of widespread Internet access, it is therefore conceivable to suspect that in conducting the current research study via an Internet survey, it was possible to reach a significant majority of the eligible voting public - at which the study was aimed.

There are several advantages that web surveys have over other methods of data collection, which generally relate to increased efficiencies of administration and collection (Dillman, 2007). The most important and relevant reasons for their implementation include: a low cost of administration; reduced response time; the convenience and fast speed of data collection and data analysis because data are captured electronically; the potential of being more inclusive (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Granello & Wheaton, 2004; Wyatt, 2000); and the wide variety of available options and flexibility in format and design capability (Dillman, 2007; Granello & Wheaton, 2004). This method can also help protect against human error and can alert participants if they have accidentally skipped a question (Coombes, 2001). Internet surveys can also make responding more accurate. One study found that web survey respondents are also more apt to self-disclose, with the promise of anonymity that can be offered by such a survey method (Hanna, Weinberg, Dant, & Berger, 2005). Furthermore, social desirability bias caused by the presence of an interviewer is avoided by using an online self-completion survey (Bryman, 2012).

As with any method of data collection, there are drawbacks to conducting online surveys, which include issues surrounding generalizability and validity of the data (Wyatt, 2000). It is challenging to obtain a representative sample (Granello & Wheaton, 2004) and although many persons have access to the Internet, conducting a survey purely online eliminates persons who are without or have limited access, which may impact the generalizability of results. As well, it is virtually impossible to ensure that the same person does not fill out the survey repeatedly, which may impact the integrity of the results. Similar to any self-administered survey, web surveys are still subject to response bias and error (including sampling, coverage, measurement and nonresponse error) so it is important to minimize these issues. Study 2 of this research project attempted to offset some of these issues as much as possible by gathering a probability based random sample (see Chapter 3 for more information).

The principles relevant to paper based survey design also apply to Web based surveys (Andrews, Nonneck & Preece, 2003). Web based surveys allow the researcher more control over the respondents' use of the survey and more options in terms of design. The principles of design implemented in the current study included: having a format similar to paper pencil surveys; the inclusion of instructions where they are needed, as opposed to only at the beginning of the survey; and limited line and page length. Question order, wording and clarity are also

important aspects of a well-designed questionnaire (Bryman, 2012; Coombes, 2001) and were carefully considered in this study. It has been recommended that surveys begin with easy basic questions in order to ease in participants and establish trust (Trochim, 2001); thus, following the introduction and consent screen, the questionnaire began by gathering demographic information. It is important to ensure that the survey is designed with the most limited participant in mind, because computer literacy varies, and that is not so flashy as to turn novice users away (Dillman et al., 1999). In order to improve response rates it is important to develop a strong survey which is short, relevant, and interesting to the audience (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Instruments were selected with this in mind.

### **2.3.2 Measures**

The complete survey battery included : (a) demographic questions including information such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, and household income (see Appendix A); (b) a measure of attitudes towards the treatment of sex offenders, the ATTSO (Wnuk et al., 2006-see Appendix C); (c) a more general attitude scale measuring attitudes towards sex offenders, the ATSOCJS (Olver & Barlow, 2010-see Appendix D); (d) a measure of social distance, the SDS (Willis et al., 2013-See Appendix E); (e) a measure of affect, the FT (See Appendix F); and a sex offender policy and reintegration strategy questionnaire that was created for the current study, the Sex Offender Policy (SOP) scale which includes RR and IC policy items (see Appendix G for all survey items). There were three versions of the complete battery of measures distributed, which varied only by sex offender type (see Appendix B for the definition of sex offender related to each version).

**2.3.2.1 Demographic questions.** There were 12 demographic items included in the survey (see Appendix A). These demographic items were selected in accordance with previous research looking at attitudes and associated variables, which investigated gender, ethnicity, income, political orientation, education level, parental and marital status, as main variables to be investigated with this subject matter (Levenson et al., 2007; Brown et al., 2008, Willis et al., 2010). Three items specific to interaction/amount of contact with sex offenders were also included.

**2.3.2.2 Attitudes Towards Treatment of Sex Offenders (ATTSO) scale.** The ATTSO is a self-report questionnaire developed to assess public attitudes towards treatment for sexual offenders and developed using a U.S. urban college student sample consisting of 170

undergraduate students (Wnuk et al., 2006). Initially, the authors generated a total of 35 items. These items were generated based on a combination of a) commonly encountered (by the authors) statements regarding the sex offender population and b) modification of items from other attitudinal scales (e.g., the ATS; Hogue, 1993; and the Attitude Towards Prisoner scale; Melvin, Gramling & Gardner, 1985) to include 'sex offender' as the referent (Wnuk et al., 2006, p. 38). The ATTSO is completed using a 5 point Likert Scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree," to "Undecided," to "Strongly Agree." Of note, 20 of the 35 items were worded so that higher scores reflected greater negative attitudes towards treatment of sex offenders.

As part of the initial development study, the authors conducted an exploratory factor analysis in order to evaluate the underlying constructs of the ATTSO and to identify a more concise item pool. The analysis yielded a final interpretable pool of 15 items in a 3-factor solution, which accounted for 63% of the ATTSO variance. These 15 items were found to function well both statistically and theoretically. The authors independently reviewed and named each of the factors based on expert consensus. Factor 1 was titled the Incapacitation factor and consisted of seven items (3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 14), Factor 2 was titled the Treatment ineffectiveness and consisted of four items (1, 2, 4, and 6), and Factor 3 consisted was titled the Mandated Treatment factor and consisted of three items (8, 9, and 10). Internal consistency for the 15 items retained in the final factor solution was calculated using Cronbach's alpha and yielded an estimate of 0.86, indicative of strong internal consistency. Alpha values for Factor 1, 2 and 3 were .88, .81 and .78 respectively (Wnuk et al., 2006).

The tool is treated as measuring a continuum of attitudes towards sex offender treatment from negative to positive. According to Wnuk and colleagues (2006), the ATTSO can be used in various settings, including with the general public to gather general information about perceptions of sex offender treatment. It may also be used as a screening tool for potential sex offender treatment providers, to screen out those with excessively punitive attitudes or identify those who may require further review of the treatment literature prior to beginning treatment (as evidenced by lower scores which reflect more negative attitudes towards the treatment of sex offenders), in order to ensure treatment success.

Different versions of the ATTSO have been used by various researchers; some have included all original items in from the original articles and made a total score for the tool, while others have used the subscales as identified in the development study (E. Jeglic, personal



communication, June 30, 2014). For example, in one study the ATTSO (all original 35 items) were used in combination with the ATS (Hogue, 1993) to gauge attitudes of a control group and an experimental group which received a brief psychoeducational module related to sex offenders (Kleban & Jeglic, 2012). Internal consistency, using Cronbach's coefficient, of the 35 items was 0.81. In another study, the ATTSO scale (15 items) using a 6-pt Likert scale was used in combination with the CATSO (Church et al., 2008), a brief attitude scale that measures general attitudes towards sex offenders (Church, Sun, & Li, 2011). The three subscales of the ATTSO were replicated in this study. Overall, the subscales of both of the ATTSO and CATSO were significantly correlated indicating a relationship between one's general attitudes towards sex offenders and specific attitudes of treatment of sex offenders, which provides evidence of convergent validity of the ATTSO. Finally, the ATTSO has also been used to gauge attitudes towards the treatment of adult and juvenile offenders, by adding 'juvenile sex offender' as the referent (Sahlstrom & Jeglic 2008). This study also used the ATS (Hogue, 1993) together with the ATTSO, and found that these tools were significantly correlated; that is participants had negative attitudes towards juvenile sex offenders and negative attitudes towards juvenile sex offender treatment. This provides further evidence for the ATTSO's construct validity

As there was no empirical reason to include all 35 items of the ATTSO, and because length of the overall survey may impact response rates, the 15-item version was used in the current study. Given that this scale was developed in the U.S., for the current study, item 13 (original item 25 "Sex offenders should be executed") was not included, as this does not pertain to any current or potential Canadian policy. Thus, the scale consisted of 14 items, and had a possible score range of 14 - 70. In order to keep all of the attitude measures consistent (such that scores in a certain direction were reflection of the same affect, i.e. that higher scores reflected more positive attitudes) the valence of the original scale was reversed. The original Likert scale for the ATTSO ranged from 1-5 where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD) and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA), and for the current study was reversed such that 5 = SD and 1 = SA. Therefore, in keeping with other tools used in this study discussed below, higher scores reflect positive views of sex offender treatment and lower scores indicate a negative view towards the treatment of sex offenders as measured by the ATTSO. See Appendix C for a complete list of all survey questions.

### **2.3.2.3 Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders and the Criminal Justice System**

**(ATSOCJS) scale.** This 25-item scale was developed by Olver and Barlow (2010) in order to evaluate attitudes towards sex offenders and how they are managed by the criminal justice system in Canada. The authors generated all of the items during a brainstorming session about commonly endorsed attitudes towards sex offenders and the justice system. The original survey was developed for use in a study examining the relationship between attitudes towards sex offenders and personality traits and demographic characteristics among university undergraduate students. It has not been used in other studies. The scale includes a definition of ‘sex offender’ at the beginning, twenty-one items that are answered on a three-point (‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’) Likert-type scale, and four items that are open-ended. These final four items were left open ended (i.e. participants are to estimate percentages or number of years without constraints or cues) so as to not influence or bias participant responding. Eight items are reverse-coded. Total possible scores on this original scale range from 0 to 42, with higher scores indicating more rehabilitative attitudes, and lower scores more conservative or punitive attitudes toward sex offenders (see Appendix C for a complete list of all survey questions). In the original validation study, an exploratory PCA was conducted in order to reduce survey items and identify particular components (Olver & Barlow, 2010). Two components, made up of a total of 19 items, were identified and labeled: Component 1 was titled Systems Attitudes, and this component consisted of 11 items (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 19, and 20), accounted for 23.17% of the variance and had an alpha value of 0.79. Component 2 was titled Rehabilitative Attitudes, and consisted of ten items (4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, and 21) which accounted for 9.77% of the variance and had an alpha value of 0.67. Item 5 from Component 2 did not significantly load onto either factor in this original validation study of the ATSOCJS.

For the current study, the three-point Likert scale was expanded to a five-point scale (from Strongly agree to Strongly Disagree) in order to be consistent with the other two scales used in the study, and to provide more response options and variability. Thus, total possible scores on the 21 closed ended items ranged from 21-105, again with higher scores indicating more rehabilitative attitudes towards sex offenders and the Criminal Justice System, and lower scores more negative and punitive attitudes.

**2.3.2.4 Social Distance Scale (SDS).** In order to attempt to measure the behavioural component of attitudes towards sex offenders, Willis and colleagues (2013) developed a measure

of social distance and anticipatory behaviour related to sex offenders, based on Social Distance Scales (Bogardus, 1925). This eight item scale measures the extent to which participants would be willing to have a sex offender released from prison as a neighbor, colleague, boss, acquaintance, member of church/sports club/community group, close friend, partner in marriage/civil union, and son-in-law. Three additional questions measure participants' anticipatory behaviour in terms of whether they would employ, rent a house to, or introduce to their social group a released sex offender (Willis et al., 2013). Participants respond using a five-point Likert scale (most definitely not – most definitely), with higher scores indicative of more-positive attitudes and willingness to engage with sex offenders. The social distance and anticipatory behaviour items demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha of .93), thus these 11 items were combined and are referred to as the social distance scale. Scores on this scale ranged from 11-55.

This scale was also used in a study by Malinen and colleagues (2014) (described previously) which investigated if attitudes towards sex offenders could be influenced by informative media reporting. These authors reported that the social distance scale again demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .95).

**2.3.2.5 Feeling thermometer (FT).** In order to gauge the emotional aspect of attitudes towards sex offenders, as has been measured in previous research (e.g. Malinen et al., 2014), participants were asked to rate how they feel about them. On a scale from 0 (very negative) to 100 (very positive), participants rated how they generally felt about released sex offenders; each version of the battery asked about a particular type of sex offender. See Appendix F for this item.

**2.3.2.6 Sex Offender Policy (SOP) scale.** This 28 item scale was created for the current study in order to identify what sex offender policies the Canadian public would be in favor of or oppose. All items were constructed by the author following an in-depth literature overview of sex offender control policies and reintegration strategies used in Canada, the U.S., and internationally (i.e. Western Europe, Australia). This included reviewing both rehabilitative/reintegration based and punitive/control based policies currently in place and including such policies as items in the survey. A review of evidence-based practices (such as the RNR approach to offender management) and risk factors relevant to sexual re-offending was also

completed. This literature was used to brainstorm items pertaining to potential policies that could be implemented.

The first 13 items on the scale were proposed and written to represent IC based policies. IC policies were those that had a predominantly more punitive/control focus and/or also lacked research evidence suggesting that they make an impact on reducing recidivism. The last 15 items on this scale (items 14-28) were grouped as RR policies. RR policies were those that had a predominantly rehabilitative focus and/or that had research evidence suggesting these policies made an impact on reducing recidivism, or generally were policies which aligned with research supported principles of offender management.

The survey items and categories were reviewed and revised by the author, fellow graduate students in the field, and several laypeople provided initial feedback. Minor wording changes were made in order to ease reading and understanding. Three content experts, who all are well-established academic and clinical professionals in the field of sex offender research, as well as the author's primary supervisor, also reviewed the survey items in order to ensure comprehensiveness, content accuracy, and coverage. Following their review, changes were made to item wording and length in order to improve clarity, simplify language and streamline the survey. For example, the word "government" was replaced with "criminal justice system," and the word "treatment" replaced with "therapy." Some definitions were also clarified; for example, the definition of dangerous offender was changed from "sentenced to indefinite imprisonment" to "sentenced to indefinite imprisonment with no specific or predetermined release date." Overall, all items were retained and no major content revisions were made following this review. All items for this scale are rated on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Oppose (1), to Neutral (3), to Strongly in Favor of (5). No items were reverse scored.

Items 12 and 27 were initially proposed to only be included on version 2 of the survey battery, because these items pertain specifically to child offenders and could potentially cause confusion in the context of the other two definitions of sex offender. It was decided after the pilot study was completed however, that these items would be included in all 3 versions of the survey, for study 2, as they were appropriately explained.

### **2.3.3 General Procedure**

Ethical approval was obtained for this research program from the Behavioral Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan. The survey was created using online survey

software and a link to the entire survey was provided to participants in each study. The software was programmed to administer, in random order, the three versions of the survey, such that one third of participants completed the survey version regarding contact adult offenders, one-third completed the version regarding contact-child offenders, and the final third completed the version regarding non-contact adult offenders.

Each survey began with a consent to participate introduction letter (See Appendices I and J). Upon each administration of the battery, tools (i.e. the ATTSO, ATSOCJS, SDS, FT, and the SOP) were presented in alternating forms in order to prevent ordering effects. The demographic questions were always provided first, before any tools were administered.

All data collected was anonymous and kept on a secure server. After completion of the survey, participants were shown a debriefing letter describing the main purposes of the research and how the results will be used (See Appendix K).

## CHAPTER 3: Study 1

The first study of this research program was intended as a trial run of the large scale second study discussed in Chapter 4. Researchers have suggested that conducting a pilot test of the survey will help reduce technical difficulties and ensure the survey is straightforward and concise (Granello & Wheaton, 2004; Wyatt, 2000). Benefits to conducting a pilot include providing clues about where the main project may fail or whether instruments may not be appropriate or effective (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). These were the primary reasons for conducting the first study. Study 1 was a pilot study and intended to be a trial of the entire questionnaire battery. Feedback regarding the battery generally, and about items on the SOP scale specifically, was used to improve the scale and overall battery for the larger study. Additional practical information gained through the process was also used in order to ensure the successful execution of study 2. This study included the surveying of university students.

### **3.1 Study 1 Specific Research Questions and Analyses**

All research questions and analyses for this study were completed as outlined in Chapter 2, with the exception of any analyses that involved comparing among the three survey versions. When discussing the results of this study the terms “sex offender” and “Adult-Contact sex offender”, were used interchangeably as this study only involved this type of offender.

### **3.2 Study 1 Methodology**

#### **3.2.1 Study 1 Procedure**

Participants for this study were university students recruited via the University of Saskatchewan Psychology Participant Pool. The survey was created and tested via Fluid Survey software which was freely accessible to the author as a University of Saskatchewan student. A link to the survey was then posted via the Sona Systems website, which is the University of Saskatchewan’s cloud-based participant management system. Sona allows students in undergraduate psychology courses the opportunity to voluntarily participate in research projects for additional course credit. One credit is equivalent to half an hour of participation. Students are able to select from a variety of student led research opportunities posted online, if they are interested, based on a brief description. There were no inclusion criteria for the current study. Students were informed that the survey would take approximately 30 minutes and that their participation would earn them one research credit. They were also informed that if they chose to

withdraw from the survey at any time, they would still receive credit (see Appendix I for the study 1 consent form for students).

Given that it was the author's intention to offer three versions of the battery, corresponding to three types of sexual offenders, the survey was originally designed to branch; that is, all three versions of the survey were intended to be distributed equally among participants. However, due to unforeseen technical problems, only one version of the survey was in fact distributed to all participants in this study. The Contact-Adult sex offender version was distributed to all 333 students.

### **3.2.2 Study 1 Measures**

**3.2.2.1 SOP scale.** Additional information regarding the SOP survey items was sought during this study in order to identify if any items were problematic or unclear, and improve this new scale before it was administered with a larger sample. Each item in the SOP scale had an additional open ended item just below, and participants were asked to provide additional feedback about item clarity and readability. Please refer to Appendix H for the specific additional instructions provided to participants in this study. Also for this study, because items 12 and 27 of the SOP scale pertain specifically to child offenders, they were not included with the SOP scale used in this study. Therefore only 26 SOP scale items (rather than 28) were administered.

**3.2.2.2 SDS scale.** Due to an administrative error, the three anticipatory behaviour items of the SDS scale (items 9, 10, and 11 as noted in Appendix E) were not included in this study. As a result, the total range of scores for the SDS scale in this study was 8-40; as with the larger study, higher scores were indicative of more positive attitudes and more willingness to engage with sex offenders.

### **3.2.3 Study 1 Participants**

Participants for this study were 333 University of Saskatchewan students who were recruited from introductory classes in Psychology. Table 3.1 shows the demographic characteristics of the student sample.

As shown, the student sample was rather homogenous. The majority of the sample consisted of young (91% of the sample was between 18-24 years old), White (75% of the sample identified as White), well educated (74% having completed some college/university already) females (82%), primarily living in an urban community. The mean rating of political orientation

for this sample, on a scale from 0-100 (liberal-conservative) was 46 ( $SD = 24.8$ ). The majority of the sample reported being single (92%) and had no children (97%). Most students (95% of the sample) had never worked with or had any personal connection to a sex offender, and 32% reported knowing an acquaintance/friend who is a victim of a sexual crime.



**Table 3.1***Study 1 Demographic Characteristics (n = 333)*

Variable	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Percent*	Mean ( <i>SD</i> )
Residing Province [1 missing]			
BC	4	1.2	
AB	14	4.2	
SK	308	92.5	
MB	4	1.2	
NT	1	.3	
YK	1	.3	
Population Centre [4 missing]			
Rural (<1K)	28	8.4	
Small (1-30K)	53	15.9	
Medium (30-90K)	46	13.8	
Large (100K +)	202	60.7	
Gender [4 missing]			
Female	269	81.8	
Male	60	18.2	
Age (years) (1 missing)			
Under 18	11	3.3	
18-24	304	91.3	
25-34	15	4.5	
35-44	3	.9	
Ethnicity			
White	250	75.1	
Non-White~	83	24.9	
Highest Level of Completed Education [3 missing]			
High school Graduate	80	24.2	
Some College/university	244	73.9	
Bachelor Degree	6	1.8	

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Household Income [141 missing]			
20-29K	51	15.3	
30-39K	5	1.5	
40-49K	9	2.7	
50-59K	9	2.7	
60-69K	17	5.1	
70-79K	13	3.9	
80-89K	17	5.1	
90-99K	15	4.5	
100K + Above	56	16.8	
Relationship Status [19 missing]			
Single	288	91.7	
Married/Living with Partner	26	8.3	
Any Children [2 missing]			
Yes	9	2.7	
No	322	96.7	
Political Orientation [0-lib- 100-conservative]	314		46.2 (24.8)
Have you or do you deal with SO in some form as part of your job?			
Yes	14	4.2	
No	319	95.8	
Do you have an acquaintance/friend who is a SO? [1 missing]			
Yes	15	4.5	
No	317	95.2	
Do you have an acquaintance/friend who is a victim of a sexual crime?			
Yes	108	32.4	
No	225	67.6	

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I have no direct experience with SO or victims of sexual crimes. [3 missing]		
True	236	70.9
False	94	28.2

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*Notes.* \*Not all categories add up to 100%, due to missing values.

~Includes Asian/Asian Origin ( $n = 50$ ), Aboriginal/Spanish/Black/Biracial/Other ( $n = 33$ ).

### 3.3 Study 1 Results

#### 3.3.1 Objective 1: Measurement of Attitudes towards Sex Offenders

Attitudes were examined by calculating the mean and standard deviations of individual items, subscale and total scores for each attitude measure.

Psychometric properties of each of the scales with more than one item, namely the ATTSO, ATSOCJS, and SDS, were examined. Scale score reliability was assessed by calculating Cronbach's Alpha for each subscale and scale. As planned, an EFA was conducted on the ATTSO scale items while a PCA was conducted on the ATSOCJS scale items.

**3.3.1.1 Attitudes Towards Treatment of Sex Offenders (ATTSO).** Table 3.2 presents individual item means and standard deviations, as well as subscale and total scores for the ATTSO scale. On average, participants scored slightly above the midpoint (of 42) on the ATTSO ( $M = 43.12$ ,  $SD = 6.64$ ) suggesting that student attitudes towards the treatment and rehabilitation of sex offenders were neutral. In examining specific item mean scores, results indicated that students generally agreed that sex offender treatment should be mandatory and provided to all sex offenders regardless of their willingness to participate. Students were undecided in their beliefs about the effectiveness of sex offender treatment, if sex offenders could be rehabilitated or not, or if sex offenders deserve another chance. This scale overall had an alpha value which fell in the good range at,  $\alpha = .81$ . Alpha values for each subscale were:  $\alpha = .86$ ,  $\alpha = .74$  and  $\alpha = .81$  for F1, F2 and F3 respectively.

**Table 3.2***Study 1 ATTSO Scale Individual Item Means and Standard Deviations*

Item/Total score (number of items)	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
1. I believe that sex offenders can be treated. *	319	3.40	.92
2. Treatment programs for sex offenders are effective. *	319	3.14	.74
3. People who want to work with sex offenders are crazy.	319	3.76	.94
4. Psychotherapy will not work with sex offenders.	319	3.48	.70
5. Regardless of treatment, all sex offenders will eventually reoffend.	319	3.51	.90
6. Sex offenders can be helped using the proper techniques. *	319	3.75	.69
7. Treatment doesn't work, sex offenders should be incarcerated for life.	319	3.42	1.08
8. It is important that that all sex offenders being released receive treatment.	319	1.54	.75
9. We need to urge our politicians to make sex offender treatment mandatory.	319	1.74	.84
10. All sex offenders should go for treatment even if they don't want to.	319	1.66	.84
11. Sex offenders don't deserve another chance.	319	3.55	.93
12. Sex offenders don't need treatment since they chose to commit the crime(s).	319	3.98	.86
13. Sex offenders should never be released.	319	3.49	.97
14. Sex offenders should not be released back into the community.	319	3.20	1.07
F1 (7 items)	330	24.91	5.01
Items 3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14			
F2 (4 items)	327	13.80	2.30
Items 1, 2, 4, 6			
F3 (3 items)	327	4.95	2.07
Items 8, 9, 10			
Total Score (14 items)	319	43.12	6.64

*Note.* \*Denotes items that are reverse scored.

An EFA using Principal Axis Factoring extraction was completed on the ATTSO Scale. Just as in the original ATTSO validation study (Wnuk et al., 2006), an oblique (Oblimin) rotation was used, because the factors were expected to be significantly correlated. A three factor solution was found which explained a total of 61% of the overall variance. Factor 1 explained 37% of the variance and consisted of seven items (3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 14) and corresponded exactly with the Incapacitation factor, Factor 2 explained 16% of the variance and consisted of three items (8, 9, and 10) which corresponded with the Mandated Treatment factor, and Factor 3 explained 8% of the variance and consisted of the remaining four items which corresponded with the Treatment ineffectiveness factor. Table 3.3 below presents the rotated pattern matrix including the items and their respective factor loadings.

**Table 3.3***Study 1 ATTSO Scale Rotated Pattern Matrix, Eigenvalues and Variance Accounted for*

Item/Eigenvalue and Percent Variance	Rotated Pattern Matrix		
	Factor 1 Incapacitation	Factor 2 Mandated Treatment	Factor 3 Treatment Ineffectiveness
1*	.11	.02	<b>.72</b>
2*	-.07	.05	<b>.69</b>
4	.07	-.16	<b>.42</b>
6*	.28	-.07	<b>.45</b>
3	<b>.34</b>	-.03	.15
5	<b>.54</b>	.06	.22
7	<b>.66</b>	.05	.03
11	<b>.85</b>	-.05	.00
12	<b>.49</b>	-.27	-.02
13	<b>.92</b>	.09	-.04
14	<b>.87</b>	.09	-.02
8	.01	<b>.72</b>	-.02
9	-.06	<b>.87</b>	.05
10	.10	<b>.72</b>	-.05
Eigenvalues (initial)	5.21	2.22	1.16
Percentage of Variance	37.22	15.87	8.26

*Note.* \*Denotes items that are reverse scored.

### **3.3.1.2 Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders and the Criminal Justice System**

**(ATSOCJS).** Table 3.4 below provides the mean and standard deviations for each item on the ATSOCJS scale, and the component and total scores. The mean score on the scale fell at the midpoint (of 63) on this scale ( $M = 63.29$ ;  $SD = 9.20$ ). Participants were, on average, uncertain about: the human rights of sex offenders, if some sex offenders could be managed successfully in the community, about the impact treatment has on re-offending, if sex offenders should be given a chance to redeem themselves, or if sex offenders want to change their behaviour. On average, students disagreed that most sex offenders commit crimes undetected. Overall, this scale had an alpha value in the good range, at  $\alpha = .86$ . Each component of this scale had an alpha that fell in the acceptable range at  $\alpha = .76$ .



**Table 3.4***Study 1 ATSOCJS Scale Individual Item Means and Standard Deviations*

Item/Total Score (number of items)	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
1. Prison sentences for sex offenders in Canada are too lenient	308	2.37	.83
2. Prison sentences for sex offenders in Canada are too severe*	308	2.25	.78
3. Most sex offenders commit new sex crimes when they are released from prison	308	2.53	.75
4. Sex offenders cannot be successfully rehabilitated	308	3.45	.82
5. Sex offenders commit their crimes because they are “sick in the head”	308	2.81	.97
6. For the protection of the general public, sex offenders should never be released from jail	308	3.44	1.00
7. Most sex offenders are caught for their crimes*	308	2.01	.88
8. The majority of sex offenders commit their crimes without being detected	308	2.14	.72
9. If a sex offender completes treatment, he/she is less likely to re-offend *	308	3.21	.77
10. Surgical castration is a suitable intervention for sex offenders	308	3.52	1.16
11. Some sex offenders can be safely managed in the community *	308	3.59	.82
12. The Canadian criminal justice system is effective in rehabilitating sex offenders and reducing future sexual offending *	308	2.89	.67
13. I would never allow for a sex offender to live in my neighbourhood, if I had any say in it	308	2.33	.99
14. People who commit sex crimes should have no basic human rights	308	3.90	.94
15. Our justice system is way too lenient in the way it deals with sex offenders	308	2.51	.78
16. Sex offenders cannot control their impulses and they cannot change	308	3.60	.87
17. Longer prison sentences are needed in order to reduce the	308	2.58	.92

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number of sex crimes in society			
18. Providing intensive treatment and community supervision is what is needed in order to reduce the number of new crimes in society *	308	3.87	.69
19. Sex offenders are people who should be given an opportunity to redeem themselves *	308	3.44	.87
20. If treatment does work to reduce sexual re-offending, this would be a better alternative than simply imposing longer jail sentences *	308	3.83	.96
21. Most sex offenders don't really want to change their behaviour	308	3.02	.75
Component 1 (11 items): 1-3, 6-8, 12, 13, 15, 19, 20	322	29.66	5.06
Component 2 (10 items): 4, 5, 9-11, 14, 16-18, 21	315	33.52	4.95
Total Score (21 items)	308	63.29	9.20

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*Note.* \*Denotes items that are reverse scored.

The four open ended items on the ATSOCJS scale were also examined in more detail. Original item responses on these four items were recoded numerically (which may not have been numerical initially). Also, when “Life” was provided as a response, this was coded as 25 years. Extreme scores (e.g. > 70 years) were removed from these analyses. Table 3.5 below identifies individual item means and standard deviations, and includes a variable of estimated treatment change, computed by subtracting the score on item 22 from the score on item 23.

On average, participants believed that 56% of sex offenders would recidivate upon release, compared with 38% of treated sex offenders. The average length of prison sentence that participants indicated would be appropriate for an adult contact sex offender was 9.7 years.

**Table 3.5***Study 1 ATSOCJS Open Ended Items Comparisons*

Item	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
22. Percentage of SO commit new sex offenses after release (%)	329	56.29	18.84
23. Percentage of treated SO usually re-offend? (%)	327	38.15	19.08
24. Average prison sentence estimate (in years)	324	4.73	4.05
25. Appropriate jail time for SO (in years)	314	9.72	8.03
Estimated Treatment Change (Item 22- 23) (%)	326	18.28	13.41

*Note.* SO = sex offender.

Bivariate correlations were calculated between the mean ratings on these four items, as shown in Table 3.6. There were several significant correlations at  $p < 0.01$ , among these four items. The mean rated appropriate length of jail time for an adult contact sex offender was significantly positively correlated with all three of the other items, with a range of small to large correlations ( $r = .28$ ;  $p = .00$  for item 22;  $r = .30$ ;  $p = .00$  for item 23 and  $r = .50$ ;  $p = .00$  for item 24). Also, the average rated percent of recidivism was significantly and largely positively correlated with the average estimated percent recidivism of treated offenders,  $r = .75$ ;  $p = .00$ .

**Table 3.6***Study 1 Pearson r Correlations among Open Ended ATSOCJS Items*

Item	22	23	24	25
22. % SO* commit new sex offenses after release	1.00	.75**	.03	.28**
<i>n</i>		326	323	313
23. % treated SO usually re-offend?		1.00	.02	.30**
<i>n</i>			321	311
24. Average prison sentence estimate (yr.)?			1.00	.50**
<i>n</i>				310
25. What is Appropriate jail time for SO (yr.)?				1.00

*Notes.* \*SO = sex offender.

\*\* Denotes correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

A PCA was completed on the ATSOCJS scale. As seen in Table 3.7, a one-component solution was found which explained a total of approximately 30% of the total variance. In total, 16 items loaded onto this single component; however, several items did not load above the .32 cut off suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). These included items: 7, 8, 9, 12 and 18.

**Table 3.7***Study 1 ATSOCJS Scale Rotated Component Matrix, Eigenvalues and Variance Accounted for*

Item/ Eigenvalue and Percent Variance	Rotated Component Matrix
	Component 1
6	<b>.76</b>
19*	<b>.70</b>
14	<b>.70</b>
15	<b>.67</b>
13	<b>.67</b>
17	<b>.66</b>
4	<b>.66</b>
10	<b>.66</b>
16	<b>.65</b>
21	<b>.64</b>
11*	<b>.63</b>
1	<b>.55</b>
20*	<b>.54</b>
3	<b>.45</b>
5	<b>.42</b>
2*	<b>.42</b>
18*	-.04
9*	.17
7*	.00
8	.14
12*	.18
Eigenvalues (initial)	6.20
Percentage of Variance	29.54



**3.3.1.3 Social Distance Scale (SDS).** Table 3.8 provides the mean and standard deviation for each item on the SDS as well as the total score. The mean total score fell below the midpoint (of 24) at  $M = 15.51$  ( $SD = 6.18$ ). In examining specific item means, most fell in the “most definitely not, to definitely not” range. Item 5, which inquired about one’s willingness to have a sex offender as a member of one’s church/sports/community group, had the highest mean score which still fell between the ratings of “definitely not” and “neutral.” The alpha value for this scale (8 items) fell in the excellent range at  $\alpha = .92$ .

**Table 3.8***Study 1 SDS Scale Individual Item Means and Standard Deviations*

Item /Total score (number of items)	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Would you have a sex offender released from prison as.....			
1. . . . your neighbour?	331	1.93	.94
2.. . . your colleague?	331	2.10	.99
3. ...your boss?	331	1.71	.89
4. . . an acquaintance?	331	2.18	1.03
5. . . . a member in your church/sports club/community group?	331	2.49	1.13
6. . . . a close friend?	331	1.89	.97
7.. . . a partner in marriage/civil union?	331	1.52	.84
8.. . . a son-in-law?	331	1.70	.91
Total scale (8 items)	331	15.51	6.18

**3.3.1.4 Feeling Thermometer (FT).** The mean of this one item measure of feelings towards sex offenders, which ranged from 0 (very negative) to 100 (very positive), was  $M = 15.39$  ( $SD = 19.30$ ). The responses indicated very negative feelings towards sex offenders.

### **3.3.2 Objective 2: Policy Endorsement, Sex Offender Policy (SOP) Scale Psychometrics**

Individual items on the SOP were examined identify which policies Canadians endorsed. As planned, reliability analysis and a PCA was also completed on the SOP scale in order to explore the new policy scale's reliability, item loadings, and distribution.

All item and component means and standard deviation for the SOP scale are detailed in Table 3.9. Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale was in the acceptable range at  $\alpha = .79$ . The alpha value for the IC based policy items subscale was also in the acceptable range ( $\alpha = .73$ ) and the RR based policy items subscale alpha level was in the good range at  $\alpha = .89$ . Given the component level alpha values, and the goal of analyses, these scales were used independently for further analysis, rather than combined as a total SOP score.

**Table 3.9***Study 1 SOP Scale Individual Item Mean and Standard Deviations*

Item/Total Score	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
1. Sex offenders should have to be registered with the National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR), for 10 years after they are released from prison.	290	4.54	.70
2. Sex offenders should have to be registered with NSOR for life.	290	3.97	1.13
3. Information included on the NSOR should be made available to the public.	290	3.29	1.33
4. All sex offenders should have to serve time in prison for their crimes.	290	4.30	.95
5. Only high risk sex offenders should have to serve time in prison for their crimes.	290	2.60	1.49
6. All sexual crimes should have minimum mandatory sentences.	290	3.79	1.20
7. Only sexually violent crimes (those involving direct physical contact with a victim) should have minimum mandatory sentences.	290	3.17	1.44
8. All high risk sex offenders should be under an 810 peace bond after they have completed their sentence for a sexual crime.	290	4.13	1.06
9. All high risk sex offenders should be made Long Term Offenders as part of their sentence.	290	4.18	.90
10. All high risk sex offenders should be sentenced as Dangerous Offenders.	290	3.68	1.15
11. Sex offenders with a high sex drive should have to take drug treatments to lower their sex drive when released from prison.	290	3.26	1.26
13. Sex offenders on probation or parole should also have to wear GPS tracking devices.	290	3.89	1.04
14. A sex offender-specific therapy program should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	290	4.59	.69
15. A sex offender-specific therapy program should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole.	290	4.51	.79
16. In order to keep up sex offenders' therapy gains from prison,	290	4.48	.79

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the Criminal Justice System should offer therapy programs in the community for offenders who have finished their sentences.			
17. Therapy related to personal relationship skills should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	290	4.31	.85
18. Therapy related to personal relationship skills should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole.	290	4.32	.85
19. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders to find jobs once they return to the community should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	290	3.52	1.14
20. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders to find jobs in the community, after they are released from prison, should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole.	290	3.72	1.12
21. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders find stable housing once they return to the community, should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	290	3.35	1.18
22. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders find stable housing should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole.	290	3.56	1.14
23. Halfway houses only for sex offenders should be available in the community.	290	3.59	1.07
24. Volunteer options (e.g. to work a position in the kitchen or library) should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	290	3.56	1.13
25. Leisure/recreational options (e.g. ability to engage in sports/fitness, a book library) should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	290	3.72	1.09
26. Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) should be available for interested high risk sex offenders across Canada.	290	4.28	.89
28. There should be more Criminal Justice System support, beyond simple parole or probation resources, for sex offenders who request it, in the community.	290	3.99	.96
RR Policy Total (14 items)	305	55.37	9.17
Items: 14-26, 28			

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IC Policy Total (10 items)	317	39.10	5.83
Items: 1-4, 6, 8-11, 13			
Total score (*26 items)	290	100.20	11.02

*\*Note.* Items 12, 27 of the SOP were not included in this study.

An exploratory PCA using Varimax rotation was completed with the SOP scale items to inform organization of the survey items into a smaller number of components to aid interpretation. A two-component solution was found which explained 39% of the overall variance. Table 3.10 provides the rotated pattern matrix, factor loadings and eigenvalues from this analysis. In total, 15 items loaded onto component 1, and 9 items onto component 2, which corresponded with RR and IC policy items, respectively. It should be noted that although item 8 (the use of 810 orders for sex offenders) loaded on the RR policy component it was included in the IC policy component total score given that it was more conceptually consistent with the component. Policy broadly/universally applied without individual consideration was considered IC based and the purpose of such orders is primarily as a means of control and surveillance. Additionally, there is currently no empirical evidence related to the utility of 810 supervision orders.

Two items, 5 and 7, did not load on either component. These items were originally intended to be categorized with IC policy items, however, after further review it was evident that these items may be somewhat ambiguous in terms of their categorization. It is possible that these items may also be considered RR since they refer to providing more significant resources and supervision for those offenders considered higher risk; which arguably resembles the RNR approach (an RR approach) to offender management. As a result of this lack of clarity, and also because they did not load onto either component, these items were removed from the total scores of these subscales for the current study. These item means were still retained and examined individually.

**Table 3.10***Study 1 SOP Scale Component Matrix, Eigenvalues and Variance Accounted for*

Item/ Eigenvalue and Percent Variance	Component Matrix	
	Component 1 (RR)	Component 2 (IC)
1	.12	<b>.48</b>
2	-.16	<b>.57</b>
3	-.17	<b>.49</b>
4	-.10	<b>.61</b>
6	-.11	<b>.52</b>
9	-.01	<b>.65</b>
10	-.24	<b>.55</b>
11	-.13	<b>.42</b>
13	-.08	<b>.63</b>
8	<b>.34</b>	.06
14	<b>.64</b>	.37
15	<b>.59</b>	.47
16	<b>.57</b>	.42
17	<b>.66</b>	.34
18	<b>.60</b>	.38
19	<b>.75</b>	-.22
20	<b>.76</b>	-.23
21	<b>.79</b>	-.13
22	<b>.75</b>	-.23
23	<b>.49</b>	.20
24	<b>.61</b>	-.14
25	<b>.62</b>	-.21
26	<b>.70</b>	.06
28	<b>.66</b>	.02



5	.23	-.29
7	.17	-.03
Eigenvalues (initial)	6.44	3.89
Percentage of Variance	24.75	14.97

Further analysis was conducted on individual items of the SOP scale. Original item scores (scored on the 5 point Likert scale) were re-coded on a binary scale to identify the percentage of participants who endorsed (i.e., responded somewhat in favor or strongly in favor of) any particular item on the SOP survey. That is, items which originally were scored 1, 2, or 3 (strongly oppose – neutral ratings), were recoded as a 0, and items which were scored either a 4 or 5 (somewhat and strongly in favor ratings), were coded as a 1. Table 3.11 includes individual item percent agreement values. When a binary total mean score was totalled for each component, an average of 10 RR policy items were endorsed out of 14 possible items, and 7 IC items were endorsed out of 10 possible items. Participants endorsed approximately 70% of both RR and IC policies.

**Table 3.11**

*Study 1 SOP Scale Individual Items Percent Endorsement and Binary Total Scores Means and Standard Deviations*

Item	<i>n</i>	Percentage (%) Somewhat/Strongly in Favor	Mean ( <i>SD</i> )
1	333	93.4	
2	332	99.7	
3	333	53.5	
4	331	84.1	
5	330	31.2	
6	331	66.4	
7	331	49.2	
8	331	76.9	
9	330	79.9	
10	333	64.3	
11	330	48.0	
13	329	70.3	
14	330	92.2	
15	333	91.0	
16	330	89.8	
17	331	86.2	
18	331	84.4	
19	331	57.1	
20	330	64.0	
21	330	48.6	
22	330	55.3	
23	328	59.8	
24	333	59.2	
25	332	63.4	

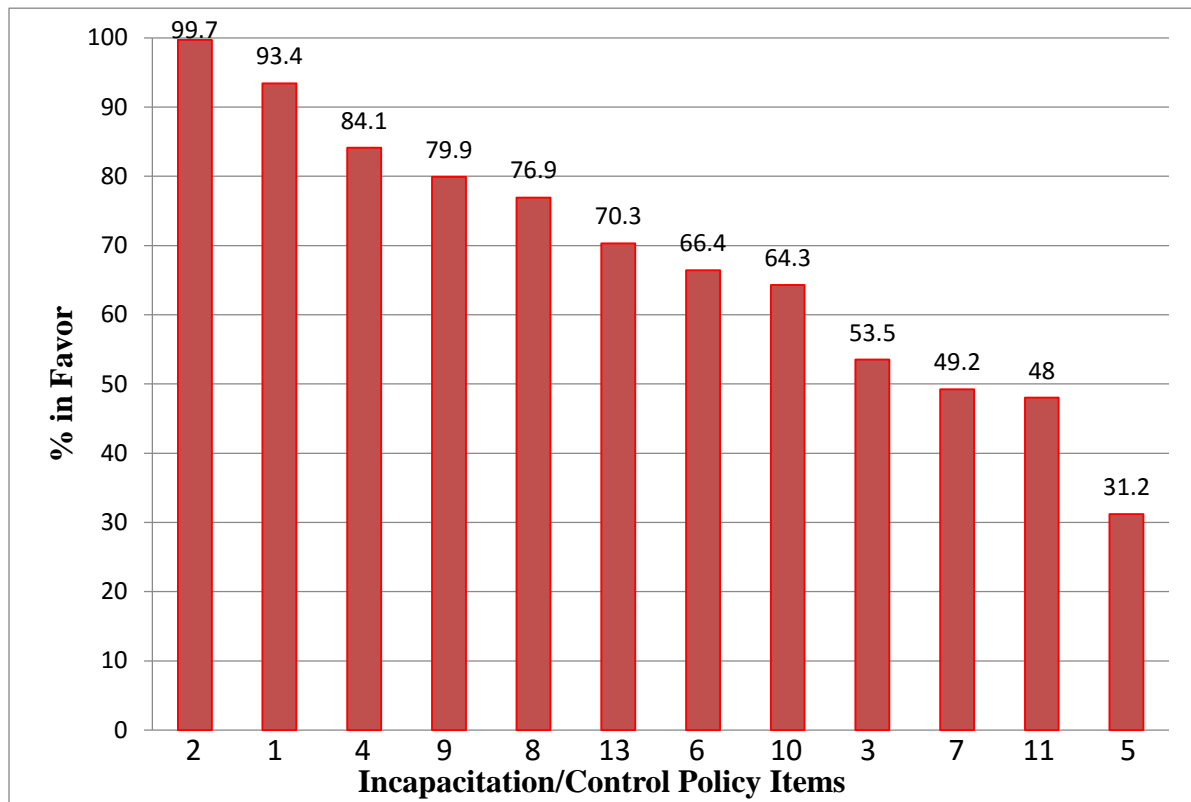
26	331	82.6
28	330	73.6
RR (binary)	305	10.2 (3.31)
IC (binary)	317	7.10 (2.19)

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 provide a visual breakdown of the percent endorsement of each item in the RR and IC components of the SOP survey, in descending order of overall endorsement. Each bar corresponds directly with a survey item.

In examining support for the various IC policies, it is evident that the sample was in favor of the majority of the policies. Almost all participants (99.7%) were in favor of all contact adult sex offenders registering on the NSOR for 10 years post release, 93% were in favor of lifelong registration for these offenders, and 84% were in favor of making information on the NSOR public. Although items 5 and 7 were not included in the IC total score, they are included here with the individual items only. Only 31 % of the sample was in agreement that only high risk sex offenders should have to serve time in prison for their crimes. Just under half of participants (49.2%) were in favor of the policy that only sexually violent crimes which involve direct victim contact, should have minimum mandatory sentences. Approximately 66% felt that all sexual crimes should have minimum mandatory sentences. Less than half of participants (48%) agreed that sex offenders with a high sex drive should be placed on drug treatments to lower their sex drive upon release.

**Figure 3.1**

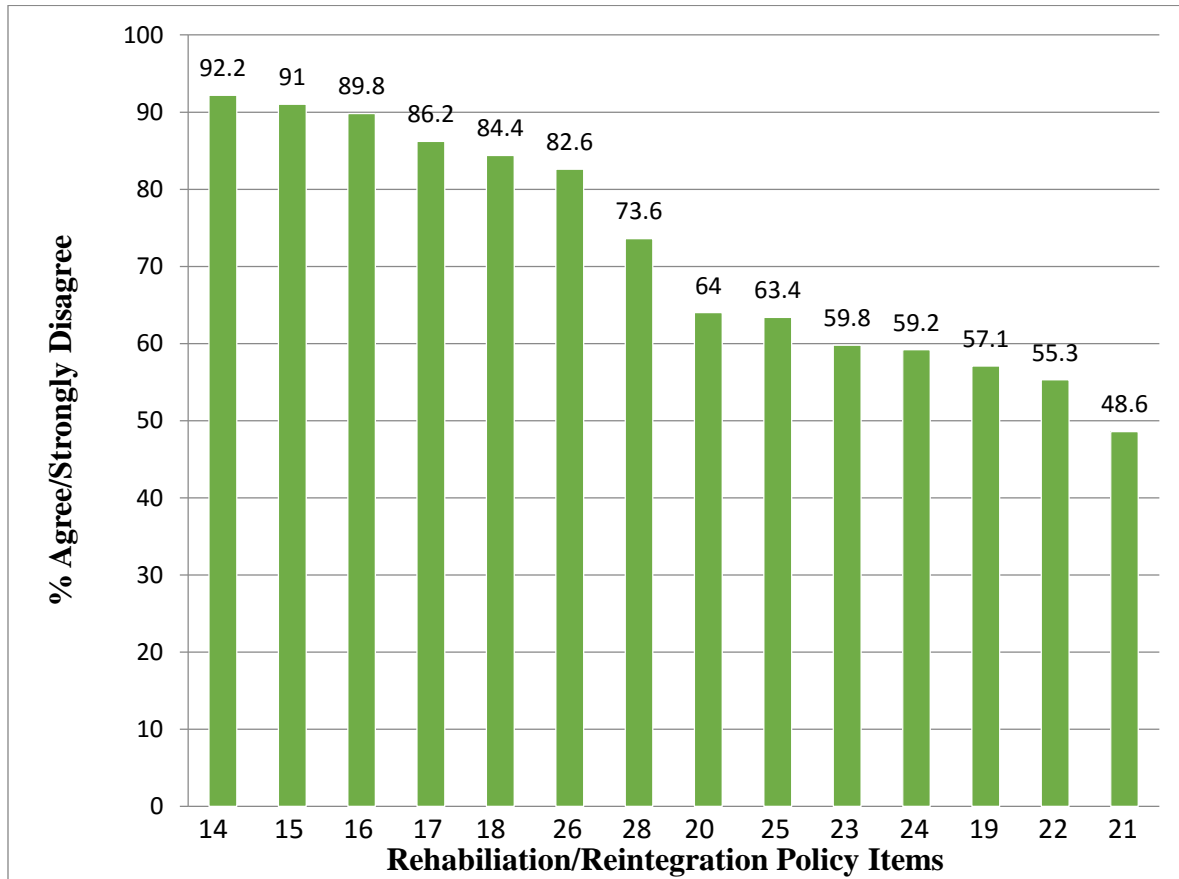
*Study 1 SOP scale Incapacitation/Control Items Percentage Endorsement*



In examining support for the various RR policies, it is evident that the majority of the sample was in favor of the majority of the policies. Over 90% of participants were in favor of providing a sex offender specific therapy program both in and outside of prison, and nearly 90% agreed that additional therapy programs should be offered to offenders in the community upon completion of their sentence. Approximately 63% of students were in favor of providing leisure/recreation programs to sex offenders in prison. Nearly half of respondents (48.6%) were in favor of having institutional programs to help offenders find stable housing in the community and 55% were in favor of offering such programs to offenders on probation or parole in the community.

**Figure 3.2**

*Study 1 SOP Scale Rehabilitation/Reintegration Items Percentage Endorsement*





### 3.3.3 Objective 3: Relationships among Study Factors

**3.3.3.1 Relationships among attitude measures.** Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to investigate the relationships between each attitude measure (Table 3.12), including total scores and subscales. Because hypotheses with regard to the direction of the relationship were developed, one tailed significance tests and  $p$ -values are reported. As hypothesized, all four of the attitude measures (total scores) were significantly and positively correlated with one another. The largest significant correlation between scales was observed between the ATTSO and ATSOCJS ( $r = .77, p < .00$ ). Given that no correlation value exceeded .90, multicollinearity among the scales was not a concern. The lowest, although still significant correlations, were between the FT and the ATTSO and ATSOCJS ( $r = .18, p = .00$  and  $r = .18, p = .00$ , respectively). The SDS had medium-large correlations with the FT and the ATTSO and ATSOCJS ( $r = .30, p = .00$ ;  $r = .48, p = .00$ , and  $r = .52, p = .00$ , respectively).

**3.3.3.2 Relationship among attitude measures and policy endorsement.** As hypothesized, attitudes were significantly associated with policy endorsement in the expected direction. Total scores from the ATTSO, ATSOCJS and the SDS were all moderately and positively correlated with the RR policy total score ( $r = .40, p = .00$ ;  $r = .48, p = .00$ , and  $r = .32, p = .00$ , respectively), as well as moderate-largely negatively correlated with the IC policy total score ( $r = -.43, p = .00$ ;  $r = -.55, p = .00$ , and  $r = -.31, p = .00$ , respectively), at  $\alpha = 0.01$  level. The FT scale was significantly negatively correlated at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level with RR policy ( $r = .10, p = .04$ ) and also significantly negatively correlated at  $\alpha = 0.01$ , with IC policy ( $r = -.26, p = .00$ ); these correlations had small-medium effect sizes. RR and IC policy scores were not significantly correlated with one another ( $r = -.04, p = .27$ ).

**Table 3.12**

### *Study 1 Pearson r Correlations among Attitude Scales, Subscales and Policy Total Scores*

[illegible]

RR		1.00	-.04
	<i>n</i>		293
IC			1.00

*Notes.* \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (one-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (one-tailed).

### 3.3.3.3 Relationships among demographic variables, attitudes and policy

**endorsement.** In order to investigate the relationships among demographic variables and attitudes and policy endorsement, correlations (both Pearson and Spearman) were computed. Pearson correlation coefficients between continuous demographic variables and attitude and policy scale total scores were computed (see Table 3.13). It is notable that a large proportion of the sample did not report their household income (42%). This may be because they were uncertain given the high probability that many were living with their parents or still considered dependents.

As anticipated, several demographic variables were significantly associated with attitude scores. There were several significant correlations at  $\alpha = 0.01$  among the age and political orientation variables. Age was positively and significantly correlated with FT ( $r = .14, p = .01$ ) and RR policy total ( $r = .13, p = .03$ ). Political orientation was significantly negatively correlated with the ATSOCJS total score ( $r = -.14, p = .02$ ), as well as significantly positively correlated with IC policy total ( $r = .13, p = .03$ ). Notably, all significant correlations were small. Household income, education, and population size were not significantly correlated with any attitude or policy scales.

**Table 3.13**

*Study 1 Pearson r Correlations among Continuous Demographic Variables and Attitude and Policy Scales Total Scores*

Variable		Scale					
		ATTSO	ATSOCJS	FT	SDS	RR	IC
Age		.03	.09	.14*	.07	.13*	.03
	<i>n</i>	319	308	330	331	305	317
Education		.01	.09	.03	.01	.07	-.029
	<i>n</i>	317	305	327	328	302	315
Household Income		.06	.09	-.10	-.11	-.05	.02
	<i>n</i>	186	179	19	191	173	185
Population Size		.05	.04	.07	-.01	.02	-.02
	<i>n</i>	315	304	326	327	301	313
Political Orientation		-.08	-.14*	-.06	-.10	-.04	.13*
	<i>n</i>	302	291	311	312	287	298

*Notes.* \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Spearman correlation coefficients were also computed on these variables in order to identify any relationships, given that the continuous variables included were ordinal variables (see Table 3.14). There were only two minor differences between the Person and Spearman statistics. Age was only significantly positively correlated with RR policy endorsement ( $r = .14$ ;  $p = .02$ ), and political orientation was also significantly negatively correlated with the ATTSO total score ( $r = -.12$ ,  $p = .05$ ). Once again all of these significant relationships were small.

**Table 3.14**

*Study 1 Spearman Correlations among Continuous Demographic Variables and Attitude and Policy Scales Total Scores*

Variable		Scale					
		ATTSO	ATSOCJS	FT	SDS	RR	IC
Age		.04	.09	.10	.03	.14*	.01
	<i>n</i>	319	308	330	331	305	317
Education		.04	.11	.06	-.00	.09	-.03
	<i>n</i>	317	305	327	328	302	315
Household Income		.05	.11	-.07	-.09	-.08	.02
	<i>n</i>	186	179	192	191	173	185
Population Size		.08	.06	.04	.02	.04	.03
	<i>n</i>	315	304	326	327	301	313
Political Orientation		-.12*	-.17**	-.03	-.09	-.10	.12*
	<i>n</i>	302	291	311	312	287	298

*Notes.* \* Denotes correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

\*\* Denotes correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

For binary demographic variables, independent sample *t*-tests were computed to identify any significant relationships among these variables and attitude scores and policy endorsement. Please note for these and any further analysis in this study involving these variables, they were coded in the following manner: 1) gender was coded 1=male, 2=female, 2) ethnicity was coded 1=White, 2 = non-White 3) Know a victim, Know an offender, No experience with sex offenders were all coded 1= Yes/True, 2 = No/False. *T*-tests were not completed for the following variables: relationship status, parental status, and working with a sex offender, because cell sizes were too small.

Gender and ethnicity were the only two variables which differed significantly among the various attitude measures. Women had significantly lower scores on both the ATSOCJS and FT scales ( $p = .01$ ; women  $M = 62.71$ ,  $SD = 9.20$  and men  $M = 66.05$ ,  $SD = 8.46$ ), Cohen's  $d = -.38$ , and  $-.31$  respectively. Women also had significantly higher endorsement of IC policies compared to men ( $p = .01$ ; women  $M = 39.45$ ,  $SD = 5.51$  and men  $M = 37.20$ ,  $SD = 6.63$ ), Cohen's  $d = .37$ . Persons who identified as White in the sample had significantly lower FT mean scores (Cohen's  $d = -.38$ ) and had higher endorsed of both RR (Cohen's  $d = .44$ ) and IC policies (Cohen's  $d = .33$ ), compared with non-White participants. All significant differences between these binary demographic variables were small. Scores on the attitude and policy measures did not vary as a result of having prior experience with a sex offender or not, or knowing/not knowing a victim of a sexual crime.



**Table 3.15***Study 1 T-tests for binary demographic variables and the attitude and policy total scores*

Variables			Scale					
			ATTSO	ATSOCJS	FT	SDS	RR	IC
Gender	Mean	Female	43.39	62.71	14.33	15.28	55.67	39.45
	(SD)		(6.61)	(9.20)	(18.79)	(5.85)	(9.02)	(5.51)
		Male	44.93	66.05	20.57	16.67	54.40	37.20
			(6.53)	(8.46)	(21.27)	(7.38)	(9.98)	(6.63)
		<i>T</i> -stat	1.59	2.51	2.27	1.58	.93	2.64
		Sig.	.11	.01	.02	.12	.36	.01
Ethnicity	Mean	White	43.76	63.25	13.38	15.74	56.31	39.61
	(SD)		(6.80)	(9.38)	(16.72)	(6.03)	(8.86)	(5.46)
		Non	43.19	63.39	21.48	14.79	52.28	37.58
			(6.16)	(8.68)	(24.73)	(6.61)	(9.58)	(6.61)
		<i>T</i> -stat	.65	.11	3.34	1.21	3.29	2.71
		Sig.	.52	.91	.00	.23	.00	.01
Know Victim	Mean	Yes	43.73	62.19	12.60	15.67	55.23	39.98
	(SD)		(7.95)	(10.44)	(17.88)	(6.50)	(9.28)	(5.93)
		No	43.57	63.82	16.71	15.44	55.44	38.67
			(5.94)	(8.50)	(19.84)	(6.03)	(9.14)	(5.74)
		<i>T</i> -stat	.19	1.46	1.81	.32	.19	1.89
		Sig.	.85	.14	.07	.75	.85	.06
No Direct SO Exp.	Mean	True	43.46	63.32	16.30	15.33	55.05	39.15
	(SD)		(6.29)	(8.87)	(20.47)	(6.30)	(9.30)	(5.62)
		False	43.91	63.16	13.27	16.02	55.95	38.93
			(7.54)	(10.14)	(16.12)	(5.93)	(8.99)	(6.38)
		<i>T</i> -stat	.54	.14	1.27	.92	.78	.30
		Sig.	.59	.89	.20	.36	.438	.76

### **3.3.4 Objective 4: Predictor-Criterion Relationships of Policy Endorsement**

Multiple regression analyses were completed in order to identify which variables (including demographic variables as well as attitudes) were associated with particular policy endorsement. Several regressions were run: first, a model comprised of demographic variables, then a model comprised of attitude measures, and finally a model comprised of a combination of both demographic variables and attitude measures. All regressions were run for both RR and IC policy.

**3.3.4.1 Demographic variables and policy endorsement.** All demographic variables which were significantly correlated with policy endorsement were entered into the regression models (Table 3.16). The initial model with demographic variables was significant as hypothesized with  $R^2 = .06$ ,  $F(5, 27) = 3.69$ ,  $p = .00$  for RR policy endorsement, and  $R^2 = .05$ ,  $F(5, 283) = 2.67$ ,  $p = .02$  for IC policy endorsement. Although these models were significant, they only accounted for a small amount of variance in policy endorsement (6.4% and 4.5% of the variance in RR and IC policy endorsement, respectively). Ethnicity was the only demographic variable that accounted for unique variance in RR policy endorsement, beyond the other variables. Political orientation was the only demographic variable that accounted for unique variance in IC policy endorsement.

**Table 3.16***Study 1 Multiple Regression: Prediction of Policy Endorsement by Demographic Variables*

Rehabilitation/Reintegration Policy				Incapacitation/Control Policy			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 277)	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 288)	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Gender	-.28	-.01	.85	Gender	-1.69	-.13	.06
Ethnicity	-5.26	-.24	.00	Ethnicity	-1.25	-.09	.12
City Size	.04	.01	.94	City Size	.09	.02	.78
Political Orientation	-.03	-.08	.19	Political Orientation	.03	.12	.04
Experience with SO	1.16	.06	.34	Experience with SO	-.39	-.03	.61
(Constant)	62.08		.00	(Constant)	41.40		.00
$R = .25, R^2 = .06, F(5, 272) = 3.69, p = .00$				$R = .212, R^2 = .05, F(5, 283) = 2.67, p = .02$			

**3.3.4.2 Attitudes and policy endorsement.** All four attitude measures were entered into regression models for RR and IC policy respectively (Table 3.17). Both of the models with attitude measures were significantly associated policy endorsement ( $p < .05$ ) as hypothesized. Scores on the ATSOCJS, SDS and FT were all significant unique predictors of RR policy endorsement ( $R^2 = .27$ ,  $F(4, 266) = 24.38$ ,  $p = .00$ ). The ATSOCJS and the FT were also significant contributors to the model explaining the variance in IC policy endorsement ( $R^2 = .32$ ,  $F(4, 273) = 32.05$ ,  $p = .00$ ).

**Table 3.17***Study 1 Multiple Regression: Prediction of Policy Endorsement by Attitude Measures*

Rehabilitation/Reintegration Policy				Incapacitation/Control Policy			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 271)	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>P</i>	Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 278)	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
ATTSO	.14	.11	.21	ATTSO	-.07	-.08	.35
ATSOCJS	.34	.35	.00	ATSOCJS	-.30	-.46	.00
SDS	.20	.14	.02	SDS	.01	.01	.86
FT	-.10	-.21	.00	FT	-.05	-.15	.00
(Constant)	26.27		.00	(Constant)	61.27		.00
$R = .52, R^2 = .27, F(4, 266) = 24.38, p = .00$				$R = .565, R^2 = .320, F(4, 273) = 32.05, p = .00$			

**3.3.4.3 Demographic variables, attitudes and policy endorsement.** In order to control for significantly associated demographic variables and identify if attitudes significantly accounted for additional variance in policy endorsement beyond these demographic variables, hierarchical multiple linear regression analyses were completed.

Introducing the attitude measures after controlling for ethnicity explained an additional 27.5% of variation in RR policy endorsement and this change in  $R^2$  was significant,  $F(3, 277) = 35.84, p = .00$ . More rehabilitative attitudes, more positive feelings, and a greater willingness to interact with sex offender (as measured by the ATSOCJS, FT and SDS respectively) were significantly associated with RR policy endorsement over and above the ethnicity variable. This final model accounted for 29% of variance in RR policy endorsement. The ATSOCJS, SDS, and FT scores were significant unique predictors of RR policy endorsement.

Introducing the attitude measures after controlling for political orientation, explained an additional 30.2% of variation in IC policy endorsement and this change in  $R^2$  was significant,  $F(3, 270) = 43.61, p = .00$ . More punitive attitudes and more negative feelings, as measured by the ATSOCJS and FT respectively, were significantly associated with IC policy endorsement, over and above political orientation. This final model accounted for 33% of variance in IC policy endorsement.

**Table 3.18***Study 1 Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression with Demographic and Attitude Measures*

Rehabilitation/Reintegration Policy				Incapacitation/Control Policy			
Model/Variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	Model/Variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Step 1				Step 1			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 282)				Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 274)			
Ethnicity	-2.79	-.13	.03	Political	.04	.16	.01
				Orientation			
(Constant)	58.87		.00	(Constant)	37.33		.00
$R = .13, R^2 = .02, F(1, 280) = 4.85, p = .03$				$R = .13, R^2 = .02, F(1, 272) = 6.745, p = .01$			
Step 2				Step 2			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 282)				Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 274)			
Ethnicity	-1.80	-.084	.10	Political	.02	.09	.09
				Orientation			
ATSOCJS	.43	.448	.00	ATSOCS	-.33	-.52	.00
SDS	.21	.146	.02	FT	-.04	-.12	.02
FT	-.09	-.196	.00				
(Constant)	28.26		.00	(Constant)	59.53		.00
$R = .54, R^2 = .29, F(4, 277) = 28.54, p = .00$				$R = .57, R^2 = .33, F(3, 270) = 43.61, p = .00$			

### **3.4 Study 1 Discussion**

Attitudes of the public are an important component of the development and successful implementation of effective sex offender policies. The purpose of this research study was to identify public attitudes of sex offenders and explore public endorsement of particular sex offender policies. The study examined the following main research objectives: 1) what are attitudes of Canadians, 2) what policies do Canadians support, 3) what is the relationship between demographic variables and attitudes and policy endorsement, and 4) are attitudes associated with policy endorsement, over and above demographic variables? The findings from this exploratory pilot study will be examined below.

#### **3.4.1 Objective 1: Measurement of Attitudes towards Sex Offenders**

**3.4.1.1 Public attitudes.** Attitudes were measured broadly, and the cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects were explored through the use of several scales. In contrast to the initial hypotheses that attitudes would be negative, attitudes as measured by the four scales were generally found to be neutral in nature. Average scale total scores were at the midpoint on the ATTSO and ATSOCJS and only slightly below the midpoint for the SDS scale. These results suggest that the sample does not hold have particularly negative or positive beliefs about sex offenders and sex offender treatment, or about engaging with sex offenders.

These neutral attitudes are surprising and may be a result of the sample surveyed. University students in this sample also had neutral (although slightly liberal leaning) political orientations, and these findings are consistent with this sample characteristic. Discovering more neutral attitudes towards sex offender treatment is promising for evidence-based policy development and highlights support for a more tolerant and rehabilitative approach to their management.

Although some scales had neutral ratings, there was variation among the different components measured. The affective component (as measured by the FT) of attitudes was the most negative, and the mean on this scale was significantly below the mid-point. This lower affective score is rather unsurprising given the nature and the degree of stigma associated with the label sex offender (Evans & Cubellis, 2015). Further, other researchers have found that the affective component of attitudes towards sex offenders is consistently negative and also that it is the least susceptible to change (Malinen et al., 2014; Willis et al., 2013). The second lowest mean score was on the SDS scale which measures one's willingness to engage with sex



offenders. It is again unsurprising that scores on this scale, which included questions such as “how willing are you to have a sex offender released from prison as a son-in law” (item 8), were not overly positive given the degree of closeness inquired about and the negative stigma associated with sex offenders.

In examining the several open ended items on the ATSOCJS there are some notable findings. As previous research has found, participants in the current study overestimated the rate of recidivism for adult contact offenders (Brown et al., 2008, Olver & Barlow, 2010). The results of this study were slightly below the estimated 60% rate of recidivism that Olver and Barlow (2010) found in the original study of the ATSOCJS. Although participants reported a high rate of recidivism, they also reported a significantly lower rate of recidivism for treated offenders. This finding suggests that the public do have faith that treatment can be helpful for sex offenders.

**3.4.1.2 Scale psychometrics.** Generally speaking, psychometric analyses of these scales including reliability and factor analysis, revealed outcomes confirming the hypotheses suggesting that these scales are reliable measures of attitudes related to sex offenders and have emerging convergent validity. Reliability analysis of the ATTSO, ATSOCJS and SDS revealed good to excellent internal consistency of these measures. These findings are consistent with the scale developers’ findings (Olver & Barlow, 2010; Willis et al., 2013; Wnuk et al., 2006). Factor analysis of the ATTSO scale was consistent with the original authors and three factors were identified as expected: Incapacitation, Treatment Ineffectiveness and Mandated Treatment. Items loaded onto these factors just as in the original validation study (Wnuk et al., 2006) suggesting a stable structure of this scale measuring different aspects of attitudes towards the treatment of sex offenders.

Although the ATSOCJS scale had adequate internal consistency, PCA of the scale revealed only one component. This component consisted of the majority of items (16 in total) and five items did not load at all. Interestingly, four of these five items were reverse-scored items which may suggest that further revision is required specifically for the reverse-scored items. These results are in contrast to the hypothesis that a PCA would reveal a two-component solution and they reveal an unstable component structure of this tool. These results do not align with the ATSOCJS structure described by Olver and Barlow (2010). These findings may be a result of the homogenous sample used in the current study; however, it is notable that in the

original study, a similar undergraduate sample was used. Further research and revision of this tool is likely warranted and it is hoped that study 2 of this research will be able to provide further clarity into the factor structure and stability of this scale.

### **3.4.2 Objective 2: Policy Endorsement, SOP Scale Psychometrics**

**3.4.2.1 Policy endorsement.** As hypothesized, students were in favor of a combination of RR and IC policies and in fact they were in favor of the majority of policies listed. Congruent with other research, these findings suggest that when provided with both punitive and rehabilitative policies, the public supports a combination of measures to manage sex offenders (Brown et al., 2008; Mears et al., 2008; Willis et al., 2010).

Participants were in favor of many punitive IC policies including among others: the long-term use of sex offender registries, incarceration for all sex offenders, GPS tracking, and mandatory minimum sentences. Over 53% of participants in study 1 were in favor of public registries. The results are in line with previous research, which has found that the public supports and seeks punitive approaches to sex offender management (i.e., Anderson & Sample, 2008; Koon-Magnin, 2015; Levenson et al., 2007; McCartan, 2013; Sample et al., 2011; Schiavone & Jeglic, 2009). Given that researchers have found some of these policies have no impact on recidivism (e.g., Levenson & D'Amora, 2007; Nunes et al., 2007; Tewksbury & Jennings, 2010; Vasquez et al., 2008), as well as overburden the justice system and negatively impact offender reintegration which can thus increase risk of reoffending (Harris et al., 2010; Schiavone & Jeglic, 2008; Tewksbury & Lees 2007), these results suggest a potential area of concern for those interested in developing effective sex offender policy designed to improve public safety.

It is encouraging that students also supported a number of policies which are rehabilitative in focus and do have research evidence to support their impact on recidivism. Participants were in favor of sex offender treatment, assisting offenders to find stable housing, having COSAs available, and generally, providing additional community support to sex offenders. These findings are consistent with research that has found the public to support and contribute towards more rehabilitative approaches (Brown et al., 2008; Mears et al., 2008).

The participants in this sample endorsed proportionally the same amount of RR and IC policies. These findings are promising and contradict the often presumed assumption that the public is strictly punitive towards sex offenders and only supports restrictive control-based

policies. Endorsement of RR policy was not significantly associated with IC policy endorsement. This is an interesting finding which reflects the fact that being supportive of punitive policy, does not rule out the possibility of supporting rehabilitative approaches as well. Despite the equal amount of support for IC policy, this knowledge can allow future policy makers the confidence to focus policy that is more rehabilitative in nature as it does have the public's support. Given that punitive policies will likely always be desired as a means of managing sex offenders, the results suggest that a more balanced approach to sex offender management would be well supported.

**3.4.2.2 SOP scale psychometrics.** As hypothesized, psychometric analysis of the SOP scale revealed positive outcomes supporting the hypothesis that this scale is a generally reliable tool to measure endorsement of sex offender policy. PCA revealed a two component solution for the SOP scale, as hypothesized. Items grouped as intended, broadly into two components consisted with RR and IC policies (with few exceptions). Both subscales also had adequate to good internal consistency. The current results generally suggest that this scale has promising potential to be used as a measure soliciting opinions about sex offender policy. Given that this was the first ever use of the SOP scale, further and continued validation is required, and it is possible that some items will require revision or exclusion. Further information about the stability of this scale will be gathered in study 2.

### **3.4.3 Objective 3: Relationships among Study Factors**

**3.4.3.1 Relationships among attitude measures.** As hypothesized, scores on all four attitude measures were significantly and positively correlated with one another. These results are consistent with the research regarding the interrelated components of attitudes (Albarracin et al., 2005; Olsen & Maio, 2003; Oskamp & Shultz, 2005). The highest correlation was observed between the two tools which measured the cognitive component of attitudes, the ATTSO and the ATSOCJS, which was expected given that these scales are intended to measure beliefs about sex offenders and sex offender treatment and rehabilitation (Olver & Barlow, 2010; Wnuk et al., 2006). Although still significant, the lowest correlations were between the affective and cognitive attitude components. Furthermore, results indicate that there was a stronger relationship between the behavioural and cognitive components, than between the behavioural and affective components of attitudes. This suggests that although attitudes are made up of interrelated components, there is variation among these different components. As mentioned

above, previous research has found the affective component of attitudes toward sex offenders to be the lowest among the three components as well as the least amenable to change (Malinen et al., 2014; Willis et al., 2013). This recent finding which is in line with past research provides more support for the focus of attitude change to be more so on the cognitive component.

**3.4.3.2 Relationships among attitude measures and policy endorsement.** As hypothesized, attitudes as measured by these four scales were significantly related to policy endorsement. Specifically, as expected, more positive attitudes as measured by the cognitive and behavioural scales (ATTSO, ATSOCJS, and SDS) were significantly and positively associated with more RR policy endorsement, and significantly negatively associated with IC policy endorsement. This is consistent with previous research which found that those more negative attitudes were supportive of community notification (Shackley et al., 2013), which would be considered an IC policy.

Interestingly, in this study the affective component was negatively associated both with increased RR and IC policy endorsement, although this was a weak association. It is curious that these results suggest an inverse relationship between positive feelings and more RR policy endorsement, and unclear why this is the case. It may be that this relationship is spurious, given the generally negative affect of the sample (mean = 15 of a total 100 on 0 very negative to 100 very positive scale). It will be important to further examine the consistency of this relationship in study 2 of the current research.

**3.4.3.3 Relationships among demographic variables, attitudes and policy endorsement.** There was some differentiation in attitudes and policy endorsement corresponding to certain demographic variables, although these relationships were weak. The related hypotheses were not fully supported. Being older and identifying as non-White was significantly associated with having more positive attitudes towards sex offenders. Being older was also significantly associated with endorsement of RR policy. Non-White participants also endorsed significantly more RR and IC policies, compared to White participants. Being a female and having a more conservative political orientation was significantly associated with more negative attitudes and endorsement of IC policy. These results are somewhat consistent with prior findings which have indicated that women tend to have more punitive attitudes, overestimate recidivism rates and endorse more restrictive policies, compared to men (i.e., Button et al., 2013; Olver & Barlow, 2010; Malinen et al., 2014; Willis et al., 2013).

In contrast to the hypothesis, no significant relationships were found between demographic variables that measured degree of closeness to victim or offender and educational status, with attitudes and policy endorsement. Income was another variable that was unassociated with attitudes and policy endorsement. These null findings are inconsistent with previous research which has found that those with more direct contact and higher educational attainment had more positive attitudes (Harper & Hogue, 2015; Shackley et al., 2013) and that those with less education, and less income endorse more severe punishments for sex offenders (e.g., Mears et al., 2008).

Overall, the results did not reveal many significant demographic differences in attitudes or policy endorsement among participants in this sample. It is possible that these inconsistent and null findings regarding the relationship between demographic variables and attitudes and policy endorsement is a result of the sample used in this study. The sample was rather homogenous and there was generally minimal range in any of the given demographic variables. Notably however, research completed on a similar sample of undergraduate students also found few demographic differences in attitudes (Olver & Barlow, 2010). Further research with a more heterogeneous sample is warranted and it is possible that results of study 2 will reveal additional demographic differences in attitude and policy endorsement.

### **3.4.4 Objective 4: Predictor-Criterion Relationships of Policy Endorsement**

**3.4.4.1 Demographic variables and policy endorsement.** Results from multiple regression analyses revealed that demographic variables alone did not account for a large amount of variance in policy endorsement. Being non-white was the only demographic variable uniquely associated with RR policy endorsement, and having a more conservative political orientation was the only demographic variable uniquely associated with IC policy endorsement. No other demographic variables were uniquely associated with policy endorsement. These results are perhaps unsurprising given the lack of variability in the current sample.

**3.4.4.2 Attitudes and policy endorsement.** Results from additional regression analyses involving the attitude measures suggested that attitudes do account for a significant amount of variation in both policy types. More positive beliefs, more willingness to engage with sex offenders, and more negative feelings towards sex offenders were uniquely associated with RR policy endorsement. It is possible that those who felt most negatively towards sex offenders over-endorsed both RR and IC policy with the idea that more policies would equal more

protection and safety from this highly despised group. In terms of IC policy, more negative attitudes, specifically negative beliefs and feelings towards sex offenders, were uniquely associated with IC policy endorsement. This result is in line with previous research which has found that those with more negative attitudes were supportive of more restrictive policies (Shackley et al., 2013).

**3.4.4.3 Demographic variables, attitudes and policy endorsement.** Results from hierarchical multiple regressions revealed that attitudes explained significant unique variance in both types of policy, when controlling for relevant and significant demographic variables. In fact, once attitudes were included in the model, demographic variables no longer accounted for any unique variance in policy endorsement for either model. Given the above discussed relationship between these demographic variables and the attitude measures, it is not surprising that they did not explain further unique variance in policy endorsement. In terms of RR policy endorsement, attitudes (including more positive beliefs, more willingness to engage, and more negative feelings) were once again the only variables that accounted for unique variance in RR endorsement. More negative beliefs and feelings towards sex offenders uniquely accounted for variance in IC policy endorsement.

Overall, these results suggest that attitudes are indeed relevant and help to explain a significant proportion of variance in policy endorsement. Attitudes were also more relevant than demographic variables with regard to policy endorsement for this sample. This lends support for the importance of public attitudes on this topic, and provides a greater understanding about what variables are associated with support for certain policies, although more study on this topic is necessary.

### **3.5 Study 1 Strengths and Limitations**

The current study had a number of limitations as well as strengths. This study relied on a student sample and as a result the sample was homogenous consistent of primarily young, single, and highly educated White females. It is therefore difficult to draw any significant conclusions from the demographic questions because there was relatively little variability in the sample. It is also hard to generalize from this sample to the larger population. This study also, as result of technical difficulties, only examined attitudes towards one particular type of sex offender. Therefore, several research objectives could not be examined using the data collected.

Despite these limitations there also were several strengths of the study. The current study was a successful pilot in that through this study, the SOP scale was administered and feedback was solicited in order to improve and/or clarify the questions. Additionally, completing this pilot study also helped the author to prepare for unforeseen circumstances that may have caused significant problems in the second study; thus as a pilot project it was successful in its purpose. Although rather homogenous, the study's sample was sizeable and allowed for the execution of factor analyses and the remaining analyses. Furthermore, although this was a university student sample, this is not an atypical population from which to begin studying these phenomenon (e.g., Church et al., 2008; Olver & Barlow, 2010; Wnuk et al., 2006) and this study provides a useful starting point for this exploratory research.

### **3.6 Study 1 Conclusion**

The current findings deliver valuable preliminary information about Canadian attitudes towards sex offenders and support for various sex offender policies, to inform the research objectives of this project. Knowledge of public attitudes and support for various sex offender policies have important implications for successful management of sex offenders and positive reintegration into the community (Harper & Hogue, 2015).

It was found that attitudes, measured broadly, are multifaceted and are significantly associated with sex offender policy endorsement. Attitudes in this study were found to be generally neutral, although feelings towards sex offenders were still very negative. Students supported the implementation of a variety of rehabilitative and control based policies for managing adult contact sex offenders. Few demographic variables were associated with attitudes or policy endorsement, which was likely as a result of the homogenous student sample. This study was unable to examine if attitudes and policy endorsement varied by sex offender type. As a result, study 2 of this research program is warranted and will be beneficial in further exploring this topic.

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## CHAPTER 4: Study 2

This study involved surveying English speaking Canadians across the country on their attitudes and policy endorsement regarding three types of sex offenders. For this study all the research objectives and corresponding questions discussed in Chapter 2 were examined.

Specifically, this research had the following main objectives:

- 1) Measurement of attitudes towards sex offenders
  - a) Identify public attitudes towards sex offenders in a comprehensive manner including measures of cognitive, affective and behavioural domains using the ATTSO, ATSOCJS, SDS and FT
  - b) Identify if these tools are reliable and valid measures of attitudes.
- 2) Sex offender policy endorsement
  - a) Identify what sex offender policies Canadians' endorse using the SOP questionnaire created for the current study
  - b) Explore the psychometric properties of this newly developed policy scale.
- 3) Relationships among study factors
  - a) Identify the relationship between attitude measures, and between attitude measures and policy endorsement
  - b) Identify the relationship between demographic variables and particularly attitudes and policy endorsement;
- 4) Investigate predictor-criterion relationships of policy endorsement
  - a) Identify if certain demographic variables and/or attitudes are associated with policy endorsement
  - b) Identify if attitudes are associated with policy endorsement beyond demographic variables and finally,
- 5) Identify if attitudes as measured by the various measures and policy endorsement, as well as the relationships between attitudes, demographic variables and policy endorsement, differed as a result of sex offender type.

### **4.1 Study 2 Methodology**

#### **4.1.1 Study 2 Procedure**

Funding for participant recruitment for this study was acquired through a research award (\$6000 value) received by the lead researcher via the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science



and Justice Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. Participants were recruited with the assistance of the Social Sciences Research Laboratories (SSRL), and in particular the Survey and Group Analysis Laboratory (SGAL) at the University of Saskatchewan. The SGAL supports researchers in conducting telephone, online and mixed-mode surveys. First, the survey was created using Qualtrics Online Survey Software, as this was the software most familiar to the SGAL team. Next, recruitment criteria were provided to the SGAL team (i.e. the goal was to obtain a representative sample of the Canadian public), and the SGAL professionals oversaw the complete administration of the survey and recruitment of participants through a Probit panel ( $n = 1000$ ). Probit Inc. is a subsidiary of EKOS Research Associates Inc. and is a company that recruits and maintains a large full-coverage panel of Canadians. The Probit panel is probability based and panel members are recruited via random digit dialing methodology. The panel uses interactive voice responses technology to contact and recruit randomly-sampled Canadians into the panel. Once one is a member of the panel, they are invited to complete surveys they qualify for.

Although initially the researcher was told that all provinces and territories would be included in the survey, shortly into the SGAL discussions with Probit, it was clarified that the survey would be provided to English speaking Canadians only, as it was not translated into French. As a result, the eventual sample ( $n = 1008$  due to slight oversampling) involved a representative breakdown of Canadians from English speaking provinces and territories, and the province of Quebec was not represented proportionally.

Canadians on a Probit panel who fit the recruitment criteria (i.e. were of voting age, and from one of the English speaking provinces) were invited to participate, until particular quotas were met for number of participants from each province. The quotas were based on the available Statistics Canada 2011 Census data of population by mother tongue (Statistics Canada 2013), and this sample is representative of the English speaking population in Canada. In the remainder of this chapter, ‘Canadians’ will refer to English speaking Canadians, unless otherwise noted.

Due to the method of sampling for this study, survey versions were distributed randomly as participants completed the survey; however, it was not possible to equally distribute the versions within provinces due to sample size (e.g., certain provinces had a proportionally representative quota of 1 respondent). To note, this sample was therefore representative across provinces and not within.

#### **4.1.2 Study 2 Measures**

**4.1.2.1 SOP scale.** The SOP scale was re-examined after initial data from the pilot was collected. Information obtained from the open-ended items associated with each individual SOP survey item was examined. The majority of students left these items blank for the bulk of SOP items. Of the comments that were provided, very few provided feedback in terms of item clarity. For example: “not difficult to read; I understood everything; question was clear and easy to understand.” The majority of the comments provided did not include information about the question’s clarity but rather consisted of further explanation about the particular policy and/or a rationale for their particular rating of this item. For example: “it would be a good idea”; “I believe they should so the police are aware of the individual”; “it is hard to decide”; “this would be helpful”; “the government shouldn’t go this far” etc. It is possible that the instructions for these items were not written in a clear enough manner and that as a result, the students who did respond misunderstood the purpose for these items. It is also possible that students did not have any feedback in that regard and decided to use the space to elaborate. Following an examination of the comments provided, no significant changes were made in terms of improving wording or clarifying any particular items. Thus, the SOP survey as created in Study 1 was preserved in its entirety. For this study, all 28 items were included in the scale and were provided to all participants.

**4.1.2.2 SDS scale.** In this study, the SDS scale consisted of 11 items, which included the three additional items related to anticipatory behaviour. The total range of scores on this scale in this study was 11-55, and once again higher scores were indicative of more positive attitudes and more willingness to engage with sex offenders.

#### **4.1.3 Study 2 Participants**

Participants for this study were  $n = 1008$  Canadians who were recruited via a Probit panel survey. Table 4.1 below describes the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Participants in this study were primarily from large urban centres (58.5%). The sample was predominately White (90.5%) and 51% of the sample was male and 48% was female. The age of participants was well distributed in the sample. Approximately 16% of the sample was between 18-34 years old, and almost 22% of the sample was 65 or older. The sample was well educated, with over 43% of participants reporting they have some college education, and 15% of the sample reporting having received a graduate degree. Participants in the sample were also

relatively wealthy, with over 44% of the sample reporting an annual household income of \$80 000 or above. Approximately 67% of the sample had children, and 83% reported they had previously or were currently involved in a relationship. Approximately 90% of the sample had never worked with or known a sex offender, and 45% of the sample reported they had an acquaintance or friend who is a victim of a sexual crime. The mean political orientation score for the sample was 41 ( $SD = 33.8$ ) which was relatively liberal leaning.

Although participants were randomly assigned to complete one of three versions of the survey, it was also important to identify if there were any significant differences in demographic variables among these three groups. In order to identify differences, ANOVAs were computed and no significant differences among demographic variables were found. Please refer to Appendix L for these analyses.

**Table 4.1***Study 2 Demographic Characteristics (n = 1008)*

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percent*	Mean (SD)
Residing Province			
BC	168	16.7	
AB	145	14.4	
SK	46	4.6	
MB	45	4.5	
ON	458	45.4	
QC	32	3.2	
NB	26	2.6	
NS	49	4.9	
NL	28	2.8	
PEI	7	.7	
NT	2	.2	
YK	1	.1	
NU	1	.1	
Population Centre			
Rural (<1K)	111	11	
Small (1-30K)	159	15.8	
Medium (30-90K)	148	14.7	
Large (100K +)	590	58.5	
Sex [5 missing]			
Male	517	51.3	
Female	486	48.2	
Age (years) [1 missing]			
18-24	9	.9	

25-34	160	15.9
35-44	179	17.8
45-54	227	22.5
55-64	213	21.1
65 + Above	219	21.7
Ethnicity [13 missing]		
White	912	90.5
Non-White ~	83	8.2
Highest Completed Education Level [38 missing]		
Less than High School	19	1.9
High School Graduate	99	9.8
Some College	442	43.8
Bachelor Degree	258	25.6
Graduate Degree	152	15.1
Household Income [142 missing]		
20-29K	85	8.4
30-39K	55	5.5
40-49K	63	6.3
50-59K	77	7.6
60-69K	63	6.3
70-79K	73	7.2
80-99K	104	10.3
100K + Above	346	34.3
Relationship Status [9 missing]		
Single, never married	161	16
Current/previously in a relationship	838	83.1

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Any Children [4 missing]		
Yes	674	66.9
No	330	32.7
Political Orientation (0-lib- 100-conservative)	905	41.1 (33.8)
Have you or do you deal with SO in some form as part of your job?		
Yes	100	9.9
No	908	90.1
Do you have an acquaintance/friend who is a SO? [4 missing]		
Yes	97	9.6
No	907	90.0
Do you have an acquaintance/friend who is a victim of a sexual crime? [4 missing]		
Yes	458	45.4
No	546	54.2
I have no direct experience with SO or victims of sexual crimes. [3 missing]		
True	539	53.5
False	466	46.2

*Notes.* \*Denotes not all categories add up to 100%, due to missing values.

~ Includes the following: (*n*): Spanish (4), Black (12), Asian (25), Aboriginal (13), Biracial (18), Other/prefer not to say (24).

The study sample was compared with the most recently published Canadian census data from 2011 as well as the National Household Survey or NHS from 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2012). First to note, the province of Quebec represents 23% of Canada's over population and correspondingly, 23% of the 2011 Canadian population spoke French as their first official language (Statistics Canada, 2012). This province and French Canadians did not make up a significant part of the current sample, although the rest of the sample breakdown in terms of number of participants per province/territory was consistent with census data, as mentioned above.

The majority of people (61%) in the study sample were between 35-64 years old. The median age of the census 2011 population was 40.6 years (Statistics Canada, 2012). The current sample was approximately 20% seniors (65 years+), which is about 5% higher than the Canadian average of 14.8%. It is noteworthy however that the census data includes percentages from the entire Canadian population (including those under 18), and the sample only surveyed Canadian adults. The sex ratio in this study was roughly 1:1 females to males, which is consistent with census 2011 data (Statistics Canada, 2012). In terms of ethnicity, according to the 2011 NHS, 19.1% of those surveyed identified themselves as a member of a visible minority group. Our sample was predominately White (90%). Our sample was highly educated with over 43% obtaining some college training, and an additional 40% obtaining either a bachelor or graduate degree. According to the 2011 census, 64% of adults 25-64 had postsecondary qualifications in 2011. Reported household income of the individuals surveyed was approximately around \$70 000 per year which is higher than the median household income for Canadian families in 2011 was \$61 000 (Statistics Canada, 2012). Over 34% of the current sample reported an annual household income of over \$100 000. This suggests that the sample underrepresents persons with low to modest incomes.

Notwithstanding the noted differences, the current sample does generally resemble Canadian census data, which suggests that it is by and large representative of English speaking Canadians.

## **4.2 Study 2 Results**

The structure of the following section will closely follow the objectives discussed in study 1, with the addition of objective 5 which examined if attitudes and policy endorsement varied by survey version (or type of sex offender). Some inter-version comparisons were

conducted at the item level of various scales, and these results will be discussed in objectives 1 and 2; overall scale and subscale scores will be discussed under objective 5.

#### **4.2.1 Objective 1: Measurement of Attitudes towards Sex Offenders.**

Attitudes were examined in the same manner as study 1. This included item analysis and scale means, reliability and validity analysis, and exploratory factor analysis for the various scales (see ‘3.3.1 Objective 1: Measurement of Attitudes towards Sex Offenders’ for general overview).

**4.2.1.1 Attitudes Towards Treatment of Sex Offenders (ATTSO).** Table 4.2 below presents individual item means and standard deviations, as well as subscale and total scores for the ATTSO scale in the overall sample. On average, participants scored just above the midpoint (of 42) on the ATTSO ( $M = 44.41$ ,  $SD = 8.69$ ) suggesting that Canadians attitudes towards the treatment of sex offenders are fairly neutral in nature. The majority of people agreed that sex offender treatment should be mandatory, that all released sex offender should receive treatment, and that all sex offenders should go for treatment even if they don’t want to. Participants were undecided if sex offenders can be helped, if they deserved another chance, or whether or not they should be released back into the community. This scale overall had an alpha value which fell in the good range at,  $\alpha = .81$



**Table 4.2***Study 2 ATTSO Scale Individual Item Means and Standard Deviations*

Item/Total score (number of items)	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
1. I believe that sex offenders can be treated. *	948	3.34	1.01
2. Treatment programs for sex offenders are effective. *	948	2.92	.85
3. People who want to work with sex offenders are crazy.	948	4.10	.83
4. Psychotherapy will not work with sex offenders.	948	3.35	.89
5. Regardless of treatment, all sex offenders will eventually reoffend.	948	3.47	1.04
6. Sex offenders can be helped using the proper techniques. *	948	3.51	.90
7. Treatment doesn't work, sex offenders should be incarcerated for life.	948	3.66	1.14
8. It is important that that all sex offenders being released receive treatment.	948	1.55	.77
9. We need to urge our politicians to make sex offender treatment mandatory.	948	1.65	.87
10. All sex offenders should go for treatment even if they don't want to.	948	1.74	.94
11. Sex offenders don't deserve another chance.	948	3.67	1.02
12. Sex offenders don't need treatment since they chose to commit the crime(s).	948	4.12	.87
13. Sex offenders should never be released.	948	3.78	1.06
14. Sex offenders should not be released back into the community.	948	3.55	1.08
F1 –Incapacitation (7 items) Items 3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14	976	26.36	5.79
F2 – Treatment ineffectiveness (4 items) Items 1, 2, 4, 6	989	13.10	3.14
F3 – Mandated Treatment (3 items) Items 8, 9, 10	989	4.93	2.22
Total Score (14 items)	948	44.41	8.69

*Note.* \*Denotes items that are reversed scored (scores reported are the reversed scores).

As planned, factor analysis using the Principal Axis Factoring method was completed with the ATTSO Scale. An oblique (Oblimin) rotation was used because the factors were expected to be significantly correlated. A two-factor solution was found which explained a total of 67% of the variance. Half of the variance was explained by Factor 1, which consisted of 11 items (1-7, and 11-14). The items contained in this factor were all items of the original Incapacitation and Treatment ineffectiveness factors. Factor 2 explained 17% of the variance and consisted of three items that corresponded with the Mandated Treatment factor. Table 4.3 below presents the rotated factor matrix including the items and their respective factor loadings.

**Table 4.3***Study 2 ATTSO Scale Rotated Pattern Matrix, Eigenvalues and Variance Accounted for*

Item/ Eigenvalue and Percent Variance	Rotated Pattern Matrix	
	Factor 1 Incapacitation & Treatment Ineffectiveness	Factor 2 Mandated Treatment
1*	<b>.82</b>	.05
2*	<b>.73</b>	.07
3	<b>.57</b>	-.10
4	<b>.68</b>	-.02
5	<b>.83</b>	.05
6*	<b>.82</b>	-.06
7	<b>.84</b>	.09
11	<b>.84</b>	.03
12	<b>.51</b>	-.34
13	<b>.90</b>	.06
14	<b>.86</b>	.07
8	-.18	<b>.68</b>
9	.06	<b>.92</b>
10	.19	<b>.77</b>
Eigenvalues (initial)	6.99	2.37
Percentage of Variance	49.93%	16.95%

*Note.* \*Denotes items that were reverse scored.

#### **4.2.1.2 Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders and the Criminal Justice System**

(ATSOCJS). Table 4.4 below provides the mean and SD for each item on the ATSOCJS, and the components and total scores. The mean score on this scale was again just above the midpoint (of 63),  $M = 64.04$  ( $SD = 13.13$ ). In examining particular items, some trends appeared; participants believed that current sentences for sex offenders are not long enough, and they were undecided about if these offenders could be rehabilitated and if treatment reduces risk. Participants generally agreed that if treatment was effective at reducing risk, it would be a viable alternative to longer sentences.

Most item means fell at the midpoint on this scale in the “undecided” category. Participants were undecided about the use of surgical castration, the utility of treatment, and about item 21: “most sex offenders don’t really want to change their behaviour.” Overall, this scale had an alpha value in the excellent range, at  $\alpha = .93$ . Each component of this scale also had an alpha that fell in the excellent range at  $\alpha = .87$ .

**Table 4.4***Study 2 ATSOCJS Scale Individual Item Means and Standard Deviations*

Item/Total	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
1. Prison sentences for sex offenders in Canada are too lenient	920	2.41	1.02
2. Prison sentences for sex offenders in Canada are too severe*	920	2.21	.89
3. Most sex offenders commit new sex crimes when they are released from prison	920	2.65	.88
4. Sex offenders cannot be successfully rehabilitated	920	3.25	.99
5. Sex offenders commit their crimes because they are “sick in the head”	920	2.93	1.05
6. For the protection of the general public, sex offenders should never be released from jail	920	3.61	1.08
7. Most sex offenders are caught for their crimes*	920	2.00	.82
8. The majority of sex offenders commit their crimes without being detected	920	2.29	.86
9. If a sex offender completes treatment, he/she is less likely to re-offend *	920	3.25	.85
10. Surgical castration is a suitable intervention for sex offenders	920	3.27	1.18
11. Some sex offenders can be safely managed in the community *	920	3.53	.89
12. The Canadian criminal justice system is effective in rehabilitating sex offenders and reducing future sexual offending *	920	2.36	.81
13. I would never allow for a sex offender to live in my neighbourhood, if I had any say in it	920	2.76	1.13
14. People who commit sex crimes should have no basic human rights	920	3.88	1.07
15. Our justice system is way too lenient in the way it deals with sex offenders	920	2.54	1.06
16. Sex offenders cannot control their impulses and they cannot change	920	3.31	.95
17. Longer prison sentences are needed in order to reduce the	920	3.10	1.17

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number of sex crimes in society			
18. Providing intensive treatment and community supervision is what is needed in order to reduce the number of new crimes in society *	920	3.82	.89
19. Sex offenders are people who should be given an opportunity to redeem themselves *	920	3.59	.91
20. If treatment does work to reduce sexual re-offending, this would be a better alternative than simply imposing longer jail sentences *	920	4.03	.96
21. Most sex offenders don't really want to change their behaviour	920	3.16	.87
Component 1 (11 items):1-3, 6-8, 12, 13, 15, 19, 20	955	30.49	6.95
Component 2 (10 items): 4, 5, 9-11, 14, 16-18, 21	957	33.49	6.80
Total Score (21 items)	920	64.04	13.13

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*Note.* \*Denotes items that are reversed scored (scores reported are the reversed scores).

The four open ended items on the ATSOCJS scale were again examined in more detail both overall and by survey version. Table 4.5 below identifies individual item means and SD, as well as includes a variable of estimated treatment change computed by subtracting the score on item 22 from the score on item 23. Original item responses were recoded numerically (which may not have been numerical initially). When “Life” was provided as a response, this was coded as 25 years. Extreme scores (e.g. > 70 years) were removed from these analyses. ANOVAs and Tukeys-*b* post hoc analyses were completed on these items in order to identify any difference in scores based on sex offender type.

Overall, participants believed over 54% of sex offenders would recidivate upon release, compared with 39% of treated adult contact sex offenders, equivalent to a 15% impact of treatment on recidivism. Participants across groups indicated approximately four years as the average prison sentence for a sex offender, and believed that over double this amount would be the appropriate sentence for these offences.

There were differences among the three survey versions on these items. The average prison sentence estimate for the three types of offenders significantly differed. Participants indicated that Contact-Child (CC) offenders receive significantly more prison time than both Contact Adult (CA) and Non-Contact Adult (NCA) offenders (nearly 5 years more), Cohen’s  $d = .18$  and  $d = .26$ , respectively. Participants also believed that the appropriate prison time for NCA should be significantly lower than for CC and CA offenders, Cohen’s  $d = .35$  and  $d = .30$  respectively; Specifically, the mean rated appropriate jail time for NCA was 6.43 years compared to above 10 years for CC and CA offenders.

**Table 4.5***Study 2 ATSOCJS Open Ended Items Comparison, Overall and by Survey Version*

Item	Mean (SD)									
	CA	<i>n</i>	CC	<i>n</i>	NCA	<i>n</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig.	Overall	<i>n</i>
22. Percentage of SO commit new sex offenses after release (%)	53.5 (24.13)	310	54.99 (23.68)	332	54.04 (23.82)	325	.32	.73	54.2 (23.85)	967
23. Percentage of treated SO usually re-offend? (%)	38.82 (26.44)	309	40.26 (25.36)	326	37.43 (24.60)	324	1.01	.37	38.8 (25.4)	959
24. Average prison sentence estimate (in years)	3.7 (3.87)	305	4.87 * (8.58)	321	2.94 (6.36)	314	2.67	.00	3.85 (6.64)	940
25. Appropriate jail time for SO (in years)	10.60 (14.50)	284	10.96 (12.28)	296	6.43 (13.69) *	288	6.87	.00	9.34 (13.64)	868
Estimated Treatment Change % (22-23)	14.55 (14.39)	307	14.70 (13.39)	326	16.90 (15.36)	323	10.03	.07	15.4 (14.43)	956

*Notes.* SO = sex offender.\* Denotes the scores that are significantly different following Tukey-*b* post hoc analysis



Pearson  $r$  bivariate correlations were calculated between the mean ratings on these four items for the overall sample (See Table 4.6). There were several significant correlations at the 0.01 level among these four items. The mean rated appropriate length of jail time for all sex offenders was significantly positively correlated with all three other items, with medium effect sizes. The average rated percent of recidivism was also largely and significantly correlated with the average percent recidivism of a treated offender ( $r = .83, p = .00$ ).

**Table 4.6***Study 2 Pearson r Correlations among Open Ended ATSOCJS items*

Item	22	23	24	25
22. Percentage of SO commit new sex offenses after release (%)	1.00	.83**	.04	.33**
<i>n</i>		956	935	860
23. Percentage of treated SO usually re-offend? (%)		1.00	.10**	.41**
<i>n</i>			934	857
24. Average prison sentence estimate (in years)			1.00	.37**
<i>n</i>				849
25. Appropriate jail time for SO (yr.)?				1.00

*Notes.* SO = sex offender

\*\*Denotes correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

A PCA was conducted on the ATSOCJS scale. As before, and as seen in Table 4.7 below, a one component solution was found which explained a total of approximately 44% of the variance. In total, 18 items loaded onto this single component, and two items did not (specifically items 7 and 8).

**Table 4.7***Study 2 ATSOCJS Scale Component Matrix, Eigenvalues and Variance Accounted for*

Item/ Eigenvalue and Percent Variance	Component Matrix
	Component 1
6	<b>.86</b>
4	<b>.79</b>
19*	<b>.79</b>
17	<b>.78</b>
15	<b>.78</b>
11*	<b>.77</b>
13	<b>.76</b>
14	<b>.76</b>
16	<b>.76</b>
1	<b>.74</b>
2*	<b>.72</b>
3	<b>.72</b>
21	<b>.67</b>
20*	<b>.67</b>
10	<b>.61</b>
9*	<b>.54</b>
18*	<b>.44</b>
5	<b>.43</b>
12*	<b>.38</b>
8	<b>.20</b>
7*	<b>.07</b>
Eigenvalues (initial)	9.22
Percentage of Variance	43.91

*Note.* \*Denotes items that were reverse scored.

**4.2.1.3 Social Distance Scale (SDS).** Table 4.8 below provides the mean and SD for each item on the SDS as well as the total score. The mean total score fell below the midpoint (of 33) at  $M = 25.26$  ( $SD = 9.27$ ). In examining specific item means, most items responses fell in the “most definitely not, to definitely not” range. Item 5 which inquired about one’s willingness to have a sex offender as a member of one’s church/sports/community group, had the highest mean score which fell between the ratings of “definitely not” and “neutral.” The alpha value for this scale (11 items) fell in the excellent range at  $\alpha = .95$ .

**Table 4.8***Study 2 SDS Scale Individual Item Means and Standard Deviations*

Item /Total score (number of items)	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Would you have a sex offender released from prison as.....?			
1. . . . your neighbour?	979	2.33	.99
2.. . . your colleague?	979	2.53	1.02
3. ....your boss?	979	2.17	1.04
4. . . an acquaintance?	979	2.57	1.06
5. . . . a member in your church/sports club/community group?	979	2.69	1.09
6. . . . a close friend?	979	2.09	1.01
7.. . . a partner in marriage/civil union?	979	1.74	.95
8.. . . a son-in-law?	979	1.85	.97
Would you.....a sex offender released from prison?			
9. employ	979	2.60	1.05
10. rent a house to	979	2.59	1.09
11. introduce to your social group	979	2.10	.98
Total scale (11 items)	979	25.26	9.27

*Note.* Scores of 3 indicate a rating of neutral.

**4.2.1.4 Feeling Thermometer (FT).** The mean on this one item measure which ranged from 0 (very negative) to 100 (very positive), was  $M = 22.15$  ( $SD = 20.31$ ). The sample therefore demonstrated negative feelings towards sex offenders as a whole.

#### **4.2.2 Objective 2: Policy Endorsement, Sex Offender Policy (SOP) Scale Psychometrics**

Item analysis was completed to identify which policies Canadians endorsed. As planned, reliability analysis and a PCA was completed on the SOP scale in order to explore the new policy scale's reliability, and item loadings and distribution. The majority of analyses presented under this objective were conducted using the overall sample. However, some of the results discussed in this section (specifically individual item comparisons) will include a comparison among the three survey versions.

All item, scale and subscale means and SD for the SOP scale (for the overall sample) are detailed in Table 4.9 below. Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale was in the acceptable range at  $\alpha = .79$ . The alpha value for the IC policy items was in the good range ( $\alpha = .89$ ) and the RR policy items alpha level was in the excellent range ( $\alpha = .92$ ). These subscales, given their more than adequate alpha level, were used independent from one another, rather than to provide a total SOP survey score, as a result of the goal of analyses.

**Table 4.9***Study 2 SOP Scale Individual Item Means and Standard Deviations*

Item/Total Score (number of items)	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
1. Sex offenders should have to be registered with the National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR), for 10 years after they are released from prison.	876	4.34	1.03
2. Sex offenders should have to be registered with NSOR for life.	876	3.83	1.32
3. Information included on the NSOR should be made available to the public.	876	2.99	1.42
4. All sex offenders should have to serve time in prison for their crimes.	876	3.47	1.28
5. Only high risk sex offenders should have to serve time in prison for their crimes.	876	3.75	1.37
6. All sexual crimes should have minimum mandatory sentences.	876	3.17	1.52
7. Only sexually violent crimes (those involving direct physical contact with a victim) should have minimum mandatory sentences.	876	3.21	1.47
8. All high risk sex offenders should be under an 810 peace bond after they have completed their sentence for a sexual crime.	876	4.29	.96
9. All high risk sex offenders should be made Long Term Offenders as part of their sentence.	876	4.15	1.06
10. All high risk sex offenders should be sentenced as Dangerous Offenders.	876	3.64	1.34
11. Sex offenders with a high sex drive should have to take drug treatments to lower their sex drive when released from prison.	876	3.62	1.19
12. Child sex offenders (offenders who commit a sexual crime against a child) should be subject to residence	876	4.53	.82



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restrictions, once released from prison.			
13. Sex offenders on probation or parole should also have to wear GPS tracking devices.	876	4.05	1.09
14. A sex offender-specific therapy program should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	876	4.75	.59
15. A sex offender-specific therapy program should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole.	876	4.75	.59
16. In order to keep up sex offenders' therapy gains from prison, the Criminal Justice System should offer therapy programs in the community for offenders who have finished their sentences.	876	4.66	.65
17. Therapy related to personal relationship skills should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	876	4.69	.64
18. Therapy related to personal relationship skills should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole.	876	4.65	.70
19. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders to find jobs once they return to the community should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	876	4.06	1.08
20. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders to find jobs in the community, after they are released from prison, should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole.	876	4.09	1.06
21. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders find stable housing once they return to the community, should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	876	3.98	1.10
22. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders find stable housing should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole.	876	4.06	1.07
23. Halfway houses only for sex offenders should be available in the community.	876	3.61	1.22
24. Volunteer options (e.g. to work a position in the kitchen or library) should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	876	4.22	.91

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25. Leisure/recreational options (e.g. ability to engage in sports/fitness, a book library) should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	876	4.03	1.08
26. Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) should be available for interested high risk sex offenders across Canada.	876	4.45	.84
27. Criminal Justice programs to treat persons who are sexually attracted to children and feel they may act on it, should be available in the community to prevent violence against children.	876	4.65	.74
28. There should be more Criminal Justice System support, beyond simple parole or probation resources, for sex offenders who request it, in the community.	876	4.52	.81
RR Policy Total (15 items)	908	65.17	9.26
Items: 14-28			
IC Policy Total (11 items)	969	42.14	9.02
Items: 1-4, 6, 8-13			
Total score (28 items)	876	114.22	11.59

An exploratory PCA using Varimax rotation was completed with the SOP scale. This was done to reduce survey items to a smaller number of components and identify if homogenous items cluster together which would help to simplify further analysis. A two-component solution was found which explained 48% of the overall variance. Table 4.10 below provides the rotated pattern matrix, factor loadings and eigenvalues from this analysis. In total, 15 items loaded onto component 1, and 11 items onto component 2 which correspond with RR and IC respectively. Once again, like in study 1, two items, 5 and 7, did not load on either of the two components. Just as described in study 1, these items were therefore not included in either of the total scores of each component.

**Table 4.10***Study 2 SOP Scale Rotated Component Matrix, Eigenvalues and Variance Accounted for*

Item/Eigenvalue and Percent Variance	Rotated Component Matrix	
	Component 1 (RR)	Component 2 (IC)
14	<b>.73</b>	.15
15	<b>.67</b>	.14
16	<b>.75</b>	.12
17	<b>.78</b>	.08
18	<b>.80</b>	.09
19	<b>.71</b>	-.29
20	<b>.72</b>	-.31
21	<b>.73</b>	-.31
22	<b>.74</b>	-.31
23	<b>.48</b>	-.11
24	<b>.60</b>	-.21
25	<b>.63</b>	-.32
26	<b>.74</b>	-.12
27	<b>.69</b>	.04
28	<b>.76</b>	-.03
1	.10	<b>.52</b>
2	-.08	<b>.73</b>
3	-.26	<b>.65</b>
4	-.17	<b>.70</b>
6	-.22	<b>.75</b>
8	.27	<b>.42</b>
9	.05	<b>.74</b>
10	-.18	<b>.77</b>
11	-.07	<b>.68</b>
12	.01	<b>.64</b>
13	-.08	<b>.72</b>
5	.13	-.01

7	-.05	.29
Eigenvalues (initial)	8.53	4.91
Percentage of Variance	30.47	17.55

Further analysis was conducted on individual items of the SOP scale. SOP items were examined individually, both in the overall sample as well as among the three versions of the survey to identify if particular policy endorsement was different based on sex offender type. Original item scores (scored on the 5 point Likert scale) were re-coded on a binary scale to identify the percentage of participants who endorsed support for any particular item on the SOP survey. Items which originally were scored 1, 2, or 3 (strongly oppose – neutral ratings), were recoded as a 0, and items which were scored either a 4 or 5 (somewhat and strongly in favor ratings), were coded as a 1, indicating positive endorsement.

Table 4.11 presents the individual item means for the overall sample as well as the means for each version of the survey. ANOVAs were completed for every item of the SOP survey in order to identify if item means scores were significantly different as a result of survey version. Tukey's-*b* post hoc analysis was also completed to identify which groups were different. Six items were significantly different as a result of sex offender type, and all of these items were categorized as IC policies. The mean scores on items 1, 2, 4 and 11 were significantly lower for the NCA offender version, in comparison to the than the other two versions. Items 10 and 12 mean scores were significantly lower for NCA offenders compared with CC offenders.

**Table 4.11**

*Study 2 SOP Scale Individual Items Means and Standard Deviations and Binary Total Score, Overall and Significant Differences by Survey Version*

Item	Mean item score ( <i>SD</i> )								<i>F</i>	Sig.
	Overall	<i>n</i>	CA	<i>n</i>	CC	<i>n</i>	NCA	<i>n</i>		
1	4.32	995	4.38	323	4.47	342	4.09	330	12.15	.00
	(1.05)		(.99)		(.90)		(1.19) *			
2	3.83	999	3.94	324	4.08	342	3.47	333	20.38	.00
	(1.32)		(1.21)		(1.19)		(1.46) *			
3	3.00	996	3.09	325	3.02	338	2.88	333	1.81	.17
	(1.42)		(1.41)		(1.42)		(1.43)			
4	3.46	992	3.71	322	3.59	338	3.08	332	23.90	.00
	(1.29)		(1.22)		(1.21)		(1.35) *			
5	3.75	998	3.67	325	3.70	341	3.87	332	2.01	.13
	(1.36)		(1.45)		(1.41)		(1.21)			
6	3.19	998	3.28	326	3.27	340	3.03	332	2.92	.05
	(1.51)		(1.51)		(1.53)		(1.48)			
7	3.26	999	3.22	326	3.21	340	3.36	333	1.18	.31
	(1.46)		(1.45)		(1.48)		(1.45)			
8	4.29	996	4.30	325	4.31	340	4.27	331	.20	.82
	(.954)		(.97)		(.98)		(.92)			
9	4.16	998	4.18	326	4.25	341	4.05	331	2.95	.05
	(1.05)		(1.07)		(1.01)		(1.07)			
10	3.65	100	3.72	327	3.75	342	3.49	331	3.81	.02
	(1.34)	0	(1.35)		(1.27)		(1.40) *			
					*					
11	3.62	996	3.67	326	3.71	340	3.49	330	3.33	.04
	(1.18)		(1.19)		(1.15)		(1.20) *			
12	4.53	100	4.59	326	4.41	342	4.58	332	4.81	.01
	(.83)	0	(.79)		(.86)*		(.84) *			
13	4.04	100	4.13	326	4.03	342	3.96	332	2.04	.13
	(1.10)	0	(1.07)		(1.06)		(1.16)			

14	4.73 (.60)	987	4.72 (.63)	321	4.75 (.59)	338	4.71 (.60)	328	.45	.64
15	4.72 (.61)	998	4.71 (.63)	326	4.75 (.58)	341	4.7 (.61)	331	.61	.55
16	4.64 (.66)	994	4.67 (.65)	327	4.64 (.71)	339	4.63 (.60)	328	.35	.71
17	4.67 (.68)	993	4.67 (.70)	323	4.66 (.70)	338	4.68 (.60)	332	.11	.90
18	4.62 (.72)	999	4.62 (.74)	327	4.61 (.76)	340	4.64 (.67)	332	.17	.84
19	4.05 (1.08)	996	4.06 (1.07)	324	4.06 (1.13)	341	4.03 (1.03)	331	.05	.95
20	4.09 (1.06)	100 0	4.09 (1.07)	327	4.06 (1.09)	342	4.10 (1.01)	331	.13	.88
21	3.97 (1.10)	991	4.01 (1.09)	324	3.92 (1.16)	339	3.98 (1.06)	328	.50	.61
22	4.04 (1.08)	991	4.07 (1.09)	323	4.01 (1.10)	340	4.05 (1.05)	328	.31	.73
23	3.60 (1.23)	998	3.64 (1.22)	327	3.5 (1.2)	341	3.67 (1.24)	330	1.99	.14
24	4.21 (.93)	990	4.19 (.97)	322	4.17 (.94)	340	4.28 (.87)	328	1.30	.27
25	4.02 (1.09)	992	3.99 (1.15)	324	3.99 (1.07)	338	4.08 (1.06)	330	.74	.48
26	4.42 (.87)	995	4.42 (.90)	327	4.45 (.82)	339	4.38 (.90)	329	.62	.54
27	4.63 (.76)	990	4.65 (.77)	325	4.63 (.75)	339	4.63 (.77)	326	.09	.91
28	4.51 (.81)	996	4.50 (.81)	324	4.50 (.84)	340	4.52 (.78)	332	.11	.89

*Note.*\* Denotes the value(s) that are significantly different following Tukeys-*b* test.



Table 4.12 below presents the percent endorsement breakdown by survey version. As discussed above, there were only a few significant differences among items in percent endorsement on the survey three versions; the same six items identified in Table 4.11 were also significantly different in percent endorsement). Once again the differences in items were only among IC policy items. Specifically, there was significantly less endorsement for long term (10 year) and lifetime offender registration, prison time, the use of DO and LTO legislation, and the use of drug treatments with NCA offenders. When a binary total mean score was totalled for each of the RR and IC components for the overall sample, on average 12.64 RR policy items were endorsed out of 15 possible, and 7.61 IC policy items were endorsed out of 11 total. In looking at overall mean endorsement of IC policies by survey version, mean endorsement for NCA offenders was significantly lower than for CC offenders, ( $M = 40.38$ ,  $SD = 9.45$  for NCA,  $M = 42.94$ ,  $SD = 8.83$  for CC), Cohen's  $d = -.28$ , and CA offenders ( $M = 43.08$ ,  $SD = 8.53$ ), Cohen's  $d = -.30$ .

**Table 4.12**

*Study 2 SOP Scale Individual Items Percent Endorsement Analysis, Overall and Significant Differences by Survey Version*

Item	Percentage (%) of Participants that responded			
	Somewhat/Strongly in Favor ( <i>n</i> )			
	CA	CC	NCA	Overall sample ( <i>n</i> )
1	86.1 (323)	91.8 (342)	78.5 (33) *	85.5 (995)
2	71.6 (324)	76.6 (342)	57.4 (333) *	68.6 (999)
3	46.5 (325)	44.1 (338)	40.5 (333)	43.7 (996)
4	62.4 (322)	57.4 (338)	42.5 (332) *	54 (992)
5	64.6 (325)	65.1 (341)	73.8 (332)	67.8 (998)
6	52.5 (326)	51.8 (340)	44.6 (332)	49.6 (998)
7	50.3 (326)	50.9 (340)	55.9 (333)	52.4 (999)
8	85.8 (325)	87.4 (340)	87.6 (331)	86.9 (996)
9	83.1 (326)	83.6 (341)*	78.5 (331)*	81.8 (998)
10	66.4 (327)	64.3 (342)	57.7 (331)*	62.8 (1000)
11	61 (326)	61.5 (340)*	57.3 (330)*	59.9 (996)
12	91.7 (326)	89.5 (342)*	91 (332)	90.7 (1000)
13	78.2 (326)	76 (342)	72 (332)	75.4 (1000)
14	95.6 (321)	95.6 (338)	96 (328)	95.7 (987)
15	95.4 (326)	97.1 (341)	96.1 (331)	96.2 (998)
16	94.5 (327)	94.1 (339)	95.4 (328)	94.7 (994)
17	93.5 (323)	94.7 (338)	95.8 (332)	94.7 (993)
18	92.4 (327)	92.6 (340)	94 (332)	93 (999)
19	75 (324)	75.1 (341)	74.3 (331)	74.8 (996)
20	75.8 (327)	75.4 (342)	77.3 (331)	76.2 (1000)
21	74.4 (324)	70.5 (339)	71.6 (328)	72.1 (991)
22	78 (323)	74.4 (340)	75.3 (328)	75.9 (991)
23	63.3 (327)	56.9 (341)	63 (330)	61 (998)
24	80.4 (322)	77.4 (340)	83.5 (328)	80 (990)

25	73.5 (324)	72.5 (338)	76.1 (330)	74 (992)
26	86.9 (327)	87.9 (339)	84.5 (329)	86.4 (995)
27	91.4 (325)	91.2 (339)	92.6 (326)	91.7 (990)
28	88 (324)	90.6 (340)	90.4 (332)	89.7 (996)

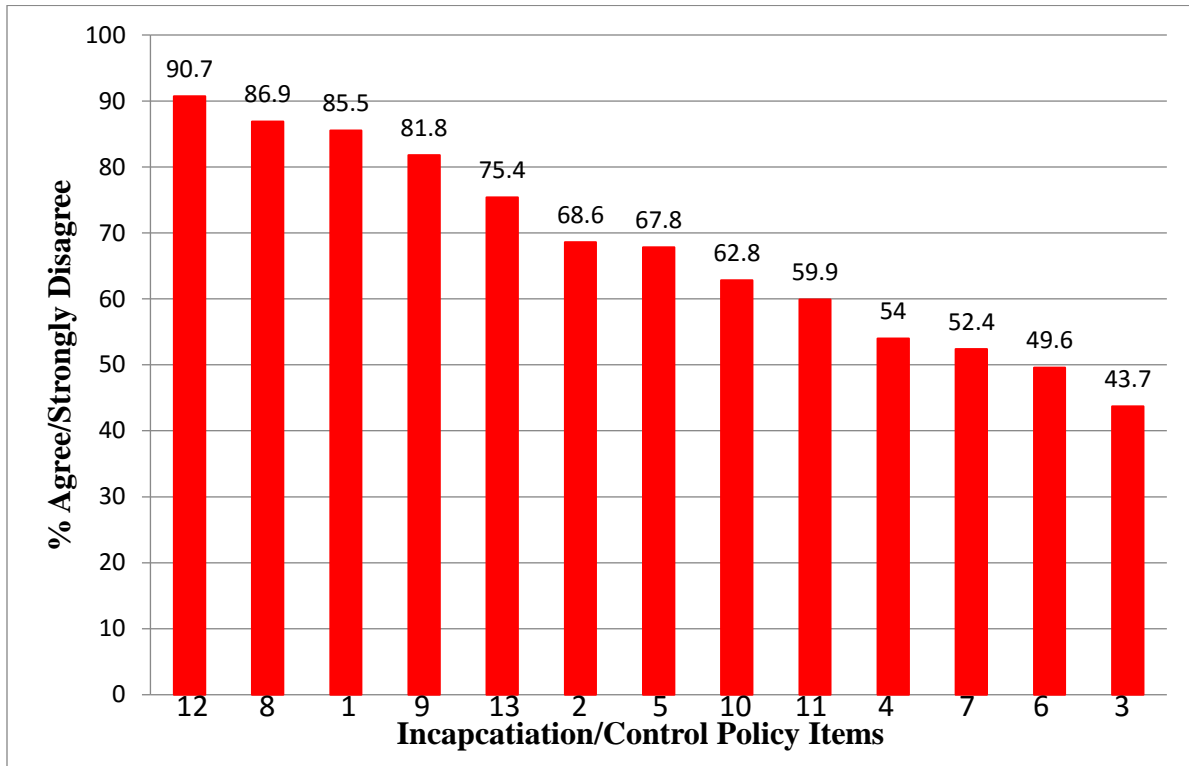
*Note.* \* Denotes the value(s) that are significantly different following Tukeys-*b* test.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below provide a visual breakdown of the percent endorsement of each item in the RR and IC components of the SOP scale, in descending order of overall endorsement. Each bar corresponds directly with a survey item.

In terms of IC policy endorsement, as is evident in the figure, a majority of items were endorsed by over half of participants. Nearly 91% of participants felt that child sex offenders should be subject to residence restrictions once released from prison, and this was the highest endorsed item on the IC policy subscale. Only 44% of the sample agreed that information included on the NSOR should be made public, and just under half of participants were in favor of sexual crimes having mandatory minimum sentences. To note: since items 5 and 7 did not load significantly onto either of the components of the SOP scale after conducting a PCA on the scale, they were not included in the IC policy total score. They are included below with the individual items only.

**Figure 4.1**

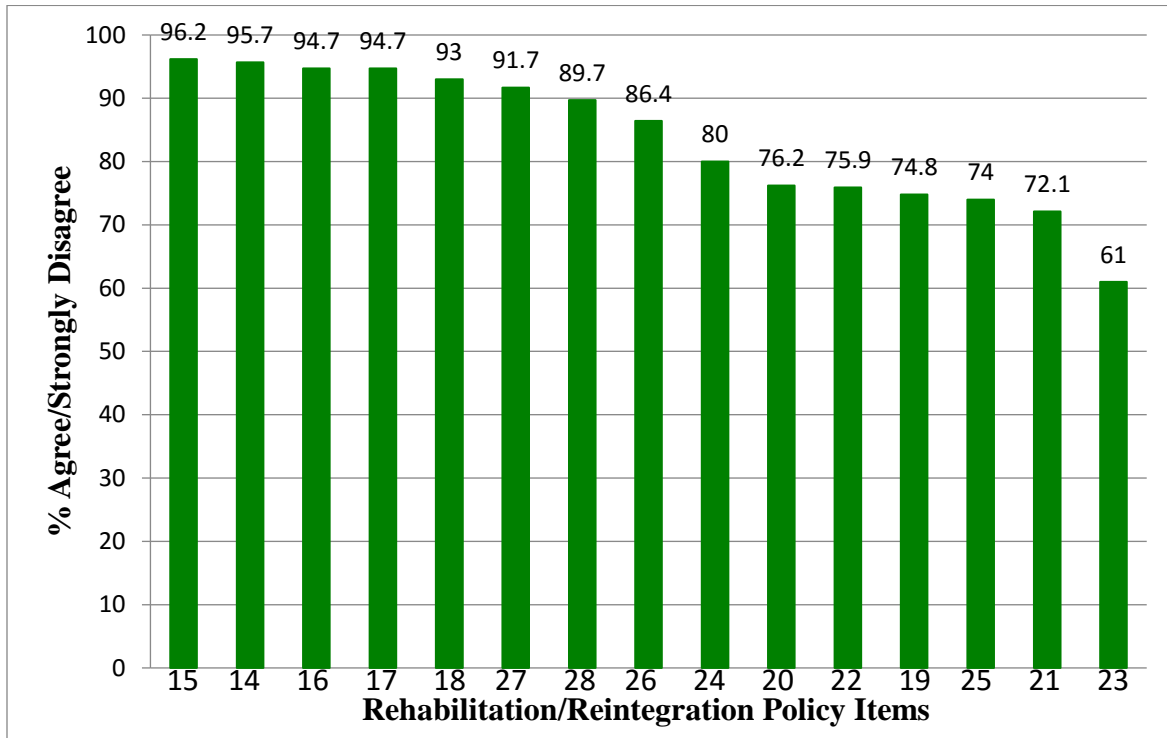
*Study 2 SOP scale Incapacitation/Control Items Percentage Endorsement*



Each RR policy item was supported by at least 61% of Canadians. Over 95% of participants were in favor of providing a sex offender specific therapy program both in and outside of prison, and over 90% agreed that additional therapy programs should be offered to offenders in the community upon completion of their sentence, and that offenders should be provided with therapy directly related to personal relationship skills both in and outside of prison. Approximately 92% of participants were in favor of Criminal Justice programs to treat persons sexually attracted to children and feel they may act on it, and prevent violence against children. Approximately 63% of participants were in favor of halfway houses specifically for sex offenders being made available in the community.

**Figure 4.2**

*Study 2 SOP Scale Rehabilitation/Reintegration Items Percentage Endorsement*



### 4.2.3 Objective 3: Relationships among Study Factors

**4.2.3.1 Relationship among attitude measures.** Pearson correlations coefficients were calculated to investigate the relationships among each of the attitude measures (see Table 4.13 below), including total scores and subscales. One-tailed correlations were sought because hypotheses in regards to the direction of the relationship were developed in advance. As hypothesized, all four of the attitude measures (ATTSO, ATSOCJS, FT and SDS total scores), were significantly and positively correlated with one another. The largest association was between the ATTSO and ATSOCJS tools ( $r = .86, p = .00$ ) followed by moderate associations between the SDS and the ATSOCJS and ATTSO ( $r = .67, p = .00$  and  $r = .64, p = .00$  respectively). The FT was moderately correlated with all three scales with the highest correlation being between the FT and SDS scale ( $r = .44, p = .00$ ) followed by the ATSOCJS ( $r = .37, p = .00$ ) and the ATTSO scale ( $r = .34, p = .00$ ).

**4.2.3.2 Relationship among attitude measures and policy endorsement.** As hypothesized, attitudes were also significant related to policy endorsement. All attitudes scale total scores were significantly negatively correlated with IC policy and significantly positively correlated with RR policy endorsement. The ATTSO and ATSOCJS tools had the largest association with both IC and RR based policy (ATTSO:  $r = -.66, p = .00$  and  $r = .48, p = .00$  and ATSOCJS:  $r = -.81, p = .00$  and  $r = .58, p = .00$  for IC and RR policy respectively). The SDS scale had a large association with IC policy ( $r = -.62, p = .00$ ) and moderate association with RR policy ( $r = .37, p = .00$ ). The FT item had a moderate association with IC policy ( $r = -.35, p = .00$ ) and a weak association with RR policy ( $r = .14, p = .00$ ).

There was a small negative association between RR and IC policy endorsement,  $r = -.27, p = .00$ , indicating that endorsement of more RR policy was associated with less endorsement of IC policy, and vice versa.



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### Study 2 Pearson *r* Correlations among Attitude Scales, Subscales and Policy Scales Total Scores

[illegible]

IC		1.00	-.27**
	<i>n</i>		879
RR			1.00

*Note.* \*\* Denotes significance at 0.01 level; \* Denotes significance at 0.05 level (one-tailed).

#### 4.2.3.3 Relationship among demographic variables, attitudes and policy

**endorsement.** In order to investigate the relationships among demographic variables and attitudes and policy endorsement, Pearson correlations coefficients were computed using the overall sample. Pearson correlations between continuous demographic variables and attitude and policy scale total scores were computed (see Table 4.14). As anticipated, several demographic variables significantly associated with attitude scores and policy endorsement.

Age was weakly positively correlated with IC policy endorsement,  $r = .18, p = .00$  but not with RR endorsement. Educational level was weakly positively correlated with the ATTSO,  $r = .18, p = .00$ ; the ATSOCJS,  $r = .22, p = .00$ , and the SDS,  $r = .10, p = .00$ , and RR policy endorsement,  $r = .14, p = .00$ . Educational level was significantly negatively correlated with IC policy endorsement,  $r = -.23, p = .00$ . Household income was not significantly correlated with any of the attitude total scores or policy total scores. Population size had small positive correlations with scores on the ATTSO, ATSOCJS, and SDS scales, and a small significant correlation with IC based policy. That is, if one is from an urban centre they are more likely to have more positive and rehabilitative attitudes towards sex offenders and endorse fewer IC policies. Political orientation was significantly correlated with all attitude scale total scores and with both types of policy endorsement, at the 0.01 level of significance. More conservative political orientation was moderately correlated with more negative and less rehabilitative attitudes, weakly associated with negative feelings towards sex offenders, as well as moderately correlated more IC endorsement and less RR policy endorsement ( $r = -.32, p = .00$  and  $r = -.34, p = .00$  respectively).

**Table 4.14**

*Study 2 Pearson r Correlations among continuous Demographic variables, Attitude Scales and Policy Scales Total Scores*

Variable		Scale							
		ATT	SOA	TSC	JCS	SDS	FT	IC	RR
Age		-.06	-.06	-.02	.05	.18**	.05		
	<i>n</i>	947	919	978	940	960	908		
Education		.18**	.22**	.10**	-.04	-.22**	.14**		
	<i>n</i>	914	887	942	906	925	874		
Household Income		.06	.06	.00	-.07	-.06	-.02		
	<i>n</i>	814	788	.84	811	826	777		
Population Size		.11**	.11**	.10**	.03	-.10**	.05		
	<i>n</i>	948	920	979	941	961	908		
Political Orientation		-.31**	-.38**	-.22**	-.07*	.32**	-.34**		
	<i>n</i>	854	827	881	854	867	820		

*Notes.* \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

For binary demographic variables, independent sample *t*-tests were computed to identify any significant relationships between these variables and attitude scores and policy endorsement (see Table 4.15 below). Please note for these and any further analysis in this study involving these variables, they were coded in the following manner: 1) gender was coded 1=male, 2=female, 2) ethnicity was coded 1=White, 2 = non-White; 3) Relationship status was coded 1= single/never married, 2 = current/previous relationship; 4) Have Children was coded 1= yes, 2=no; and 5) Work with, Know a victim, Know an offender, and No experience with sex offenders were all coded 1= Yes/True, 2 = No/False.

Gender and parental status were two variables that demonstrated significantly different mean scores on all attitude and policy measures. Compared to males and non-parents, being female and having children was significantly associated with: having less rehabilitative attitudes, more negative feelings, less of a willingness to engage with sex offenders, and endorsing more IC policy. Women also endorsed significantly more RR policies, Cohen's  $d = -.14$  and IC policies, compared with men, Cohen's  $d = -.50$ . Parents endorsed significantly fewer RR policies than non-parents, Cohen's  $d = -.18$ , and more IC policies, Cohen's  $d = .33$ . Being White was significantly associated with higher scores on the ATTSO,  $t(935) = 2.27, p = .02$ , Cohen's  $d = .15$  and SDS,  $t(966) = 2.97, p = .00$ , Cohen's  $d = .19$ . Those who knew a victim of sexual offence, were also significantly more likely to endorse more RR policies, than those who did not,  $t(904) = 2.22, p = .03$ , Cohen's  $d = .15$ . Those who knew a sex offender had significantly higher scores on the SDS survey indicating they wanted less social distance from this group of offenders,  $t(975) = 2.59, p = 0.01$ , compared with those who did not, Cohen's  $d = .17$ .

**Table 4.15***Study 2 T-tests for binary Demographic Variables and Attitude and Policy Scales Total Scores*

Variable			Scale					
			ATTSO	ATSOCJS	FT	SDS	RR	IC
Gender	Mean	Male	45.35	65.67	24.2	26.6	64.5	40.1
		Female	43.35	62.15	19.8	23.7	65.6	44.5
		<i>t</i> (df)	3.57	4.08	3.30	5.02	-2.14	-7.71
			(941)	(913)	(934)	(972)	(901)	(954)
		Sig.	.00	.00	.00	.00	.03	.00
Ethnicity	Mean	White	44.60	64.29	22.1	25.5	65.4	42.03
		Non	42.26	61.65	23.2	22.4	63.9	44.23
		<i>t</i> (df)	2.27	1.70	-.45	2.97	1.32	-2.09
			(934)	(907)	(927)	(965)	(893)	(947)
		Sig.	.02	.09	.65	.00	.19	.04
Relation- ship Status	Mean	Single	45.31	65.60	24.3	25.9	64.84	41.22
		Current/ Past	44.26	63.82	21.8	25.2	65.28	42.34
		<i>t</i> (df)	1.36	1.52	1.42	.90	-.53	-1.42
			(937)	(909)	(932)	(968)	(897)	(950)
		Sig.	.18	.13	.16	.37	.60	.16
Have Children	Mean	Yes	43.66	62.89	21.0	24.5	64.58	43.17
		No	45.87	66.34	24.4	26.7	66.33	40.08
		<i>t</i> (df)	-3.71	-3.75	-2.35	-3.35	-2.66	5.06
			(942)	(914)	(936)	(974)	(903)	(956)
		Sig.	.00	.00	.02	.00	.01	.00
Work With SO	Mean	Yes	44.96	63.36	26.0	25.1	65.65	41.80
		No	44.35	64.12	21.7	25.3	65.11	42.18
		<i>t</i> (df)	.64	-.54	1.96	-.18	.53	-.39
			(946)	(918)	(939)	(977)	(906)	(959)
		Sig.	.52	.59	.05	.86	.60	.67
Know SO	Mean	Yes	45.31	65.27	22.9	27.6	66.78	40.48

Know Victim	Mean	No	44.29	63.90	22.1	25.0	64.97	42.32
		<i>t(df)</i>	1.08	.95	.36	2.59	1.73	-1.88
			(943)	(914)	(935)	(974)	(902)	(955)
		Sig.	.28	.34	.72	.01	.08	.06
		Yes	44.32	64.08	21.9	25.4	65.90	41.96
		No	44.46	64.01	22.4	25.2	64.53	42.29
		<i>t(df)</i>	-.23	.08	-.36	.375	2.22	-.55
			(942)	(914)	(935)	(973)	(903)	(955)
No Direct SO Experience	Mean	Sig.	.82	.94	.72	.71	.03	.58
		True	44.18	63.70	22.26	25.05	64.64	42.55
		False	44.70	64.49	22.03	25.48	65.77	41.64
		<i>t(df)</i>	-.92	-.90	.17	-.72	-1.84	1.55
			(944)	(915)	(936)	(974)	(905)	(958)
		Sig.	.36	.37	.86	.47	.07	.12

*Note.* SO = sex offender.

#### **4.2.4 Objective 4: Predictor-Criterion Relationships of Policy Endorsement**

Multiple regression analyses were completed in order to examine predictor-criterion relationships between demographic variables, attitude measures and policy endorsement. Several regression analyses were calculated including: a model comprised of demographic variables, a model comprised of attitude measures, and finally a model comprised of a combination of both demographic variables and attitude measures. Regression analyses were completed for both types of policy. The final model for both RR and IC policy was also completed separately for each version of the survey.

**4.2.4.1 Demographic variables and policy endorsement.** Pearson correlations among demographic variables in the overall sample were computed and results indicated that many variables were significantly correlated with one another. Please see Appendix M for these analyses. All demographic variables that were significantly correlated with either RR or IC policy endorsement respectively (as per the above analyses under Objective 4.3.3) were entered into the regression models (Table 4.16).

The initial model with demographic variables was significant as hypothesized with  $R^2 = .13$ ,  $F(5, 774) = 23.36$ ,  $p = .00$  for RR policy endorsement, and  $R^2 = .24$ ,  $F(7, 815) = 35.81$ ,  $p = .00$  for IC policy endorsement. These models accounted for 13% and 24% of the variance in RR and IC policy endorsement, respectively. Political orientation was the only demographic variable that accounted for unique variance in RR policy endorsement, beyond the other variables. Gender, education, ethnicity, political orientation and parental status were the demographic variables that accounted for a significant amount of unique variance in IC policy endorsement, beyond the other variables.



**Table 4.16**

*Study 2 Multiple Regression: Prediction of Policy Endorsement by Demographic variables- Overall Sample*

Rehabilitation/Reintegration Policy				Incapacitation/Control Policy			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 780)	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 823)	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Gender	1.00	.05	.11	Gender	5.03	.28	.00
Education	.53	.05	.12	Education	-1.24	-.13	.00
Political Orientation	-.09	-.32	.00	Political Orientation	.08	.31	.00
Have Children	.66	.03	.32	Have Children	-1.77	-.09	.00
Know Victim	-.57	-.03	.36	Ethnicity	3.27	.10	.00
				Age	.04	.01	.85
				City Size	-.17	-.02	.53
(Constant)	65.15		.00	(Constant)	36.00		.00
$R = .36, R^2 = .13, F(5, 774) = 23.36, p = .00$				$R = .485, R^2 = .24, F(7, 815) = 35.81, p = .00$			

Next, a second set of regression analyses using only demographic variables that were independent predictors of RR and IC policy endorsement were calculated (Table 4.17). Both new models, RR and IC policy were significant with,  $R^2 = .12$ ,  $F(3, 807) = 37.99$ ,  $p = .00$  for RR, and  $R^2 = .24$ ,  $F(5, 818) = 50.27$ ,  $p = .00$  for IC.

In the RR policy regression model, political orientation was significantly associated with RR policy endorsement; this variable explained approximately 12% of variance in RR policy endorsement. Specifically, more liberal leaning persons endorsed more rehabilitative policies. In the new IC regression model, gender, ethnicity, education, political orientation, and parental status were significantly and uniquely associated with IC policy endorsement. These variables accounted for 24% of the variance in IC policy endorsement.

**Table 4.17**

*Study 2 Multiple Regression: Prediction of Policy Endorsement by Significantly Predictive Demographic variables-Overall Sample*

Rehabilitation/Reintegration Policy				Incapacitation/Control Policy			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 820)	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 824)	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Political Orientation	-.09	-.34	.00	Gender	5.04	.28	.00
				Ethnicity	3.19	.095	.00
				Education	-1.29	-.15	.00
				Political Orientation	.08	.31	.00
				Children	-1.86	-.10	.00
(Constant)	69.14		.00	(Constant)	36.04		.00
$R = .34, R^2 = .12, F(1, 818) = 109.06, p = .00$				$R = .49, R^2 = .24, F(5, 818) = 50.27, p = .00$			

**4.2.4.2 Attitudes and policy endorsement.** All four attitude measures were entered into additional multiple regression analyses to identify if they were associated with RR and IC policy respectively (Table 4.18). Both the models were significant ( $p < .05$ ),  $R^2 = .35$ ,  $F(4, 740) = 100.55$ ,  $p = .00$  for RR policy endorsement and  $R^2 = .54$ ,  $F(4, 771) = 221.42$ ,  $p = .00$  for IC policy endorsement.

Interpreting the relationships among individual attitude variables and RR policy endorsement is somewhat complex. Although all four attitude measures were significantly and positively correlated with RR policy (as described above), results in the model presented below include negative beta values for the ATTSO, SDS, and FT scales. When individually regressed against RR policy, these scales have positive beta values which is consistent with the direction of the significant correlations between these variables; the inconsistencies in the direction of the relationships therefore (i.e., the beta values) are likely accounted for by a suppression effect, given their correlations with the ASTOCJS scale. More negative attitudes as measured by all four measures, including beliefs, feelings, and desire to interact with sex offenders, were significantly and independently associated with IC policy endorsement.

**Table 4.18**

*Study 2 Multiple Regression: Prediction of Policy Endorsement by Attitude Measures- Overall Sample*

Rehabilitation/Reintegration Policy				Incapacitation/Control Policy			
Prediction Model	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	Prediction Model	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
( <i>n</i> = 744)				( <i>n</i> = 775)			
ATTSO	-.06	-.05	.39	ATTSO	-.16	-.16	.00
ATSOCJS	.48	.67	.00	ATSOCJS	-.27	-.40	.00
SDS	-.01	-.01	.75	SDS	-.19	-.20	.00
FT	-.04	-.08	.01	FT	-.03	-.07	.02
(Constant)	38.06		.00	(Constant)	72.26		.00
$R = .59, R^2 = .35, F(4, 740) = 100.55, p = .00$				$R = .73, R^2 = .54, F(4, 771) = 221.42, p = .00$			

**4.2.4.3 Demographic variables, attitudes and policy endorsement.** In order to control for demographic variables and identify if attitudes significantly contributed to the variance in policy endorsement beyond these demographic characteristics, hierarchical multiple linear regression analyses were completed. Holding political orientation status constant, attitudes and feelings towards sex offenders also accounted for a significant portion of the variance in RR policy endorsement (Table 4.19).

Introducing the attitude measures explained an additional 24% of the variance in RR policy endorsement and this change in  $R^2$  was significant,  $F(2, 715) = 134.71, p = .00$ . More rehabilitative positive attitudes explained additional unique variance in RR policy endorsement over and above being more liberal leaning. Separate regression models were run with each attitude measure independently (given the complex interrelationship between these measures in the above model). Each aspect of attitudes was independently associated with RR policy endorsement over and above political orientation. Specifically the FT item was significantly associated with RR policy endorsement,  $b = .05, t(773) = 3.12, p = .00$ , and also explained an additional 1% variance in RR policy endorsement, beyond political orientation. This model was significant,  $R^2 = .13, F(2, 773) = 56.17, p = .00$  as was this change in  $R^2, F(1, 773) = 9.73, p = .00$ . The ATSOCJS scale also was significantly associated with RR policy endorsement,  $b = .37, t(758) = 16.43, p = .00$  and explained an additional 23% of variance, beyond political orientation, and this change in  $R^2$  was significant,  $F(1, 758) = 269.84, p = .00$ . This model was significant,  $R^2 = .35, F(2, 758) = 203.86, p = .00$ . More positive feelings and beliefs about sex offenders, and more liberal political orientation were associated with greater RR policy endorsement.

Holding gender, ethnicity, political orientation and parental status constant, attitudes as measured by the four scales, significantly accounted for additional variance in IC policy endorsement. Introducing the attitude measures explained an additional 36.4% of variation in IC policy endorsement and this change in  $R^2$  was significant,  $F(4, 668) = 145.32, p = .00$ . Having more negative attitudes, including more negative and punitive beliefs about sex offender rehabilitation, less willingness to engage with sex offenders, and more negative feelings, was associated with more IC policy endorsement. Attitudes accounted for additional and unique variance in IC policy endorsement over and above demographic variables of gender, ethnicity, education and political orientation.

**Table 4.19**

*Study 2 Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression with Demographic and Attitude measures—Overall Sample*

Rehabilitation/Reintegration Policy				Isolation/Control Policy			
Model/Variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	Model/Variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Step 1				Step 1			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 719)				Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 678)			
Political Orientation	-.09	-.34	.00	Gender	4.79	.28	.00
				Ethnicity	2.50	.08	.03
				Education	-1.07	-.12	.00
				Political Orientation	.077	.30	.00
(Constant)	69.15		.00	Children	-1.73	-.095	.00
				(Constant)	69.15		.00
$R = .34, R^2 = .12, F(1, 717) = 93.75, p = .00$				$R = .467, R^2 = .22, F(5, 672) = 37.39, p = .00$			
Step 2				Step 2			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 719)				Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 678)			
Pol. Orientation	-.04	-.15	.00	Gender	2.35	.14	.00
ATSOCJS	.40	.55	.00	Ethnicity	.85	.04	.31
FT	-.04	-.09	.00	Education	-.57	-.06	.02
				Political Orientation	.03	.01	.00
				Children	-1.04	-.06	.03
				ATTSO	-.20	-.19	.00
				ATSOCJS	-.22	-.32	.00
				SDS	-.15	-.16	.00
				FT	-.04	-.08	.00
(Constant)	42.47		.00	(Constant)	68.05		.00
$R = .60, R^2 = .36, F(3, 715) = 132.71, p = .00$				$R = .76, R^2 = .58, F(9, 668) = 103.20, p = .00$			

#### 4.2.5 Objective 5: Identifying Differences among Survey Versions

In order to identify any differences in attitudes and policy endorsement among the three survey versions, ANOVAs and post hoc analyses (Tukeys-*b* tests) were conducted. Table 4.19 presents the subscale and total scores of the attitude scales and policy subscales.

Attitudes as measured by all four scales did significantly differ based on survey version. Attitudes on the ATTSO, ATSOCSJS, and SDS scales were significantly more negative for the CC offender version of the survey, compared to the CA and NCA offender versions (which were not significantly different). Feelings towards sex offenders were also significantly different based on sex offender type,  $F(2,938) = 47.12, p = .00$ ; feelings towards CC offenders were the most negative, followed by CA and NCA offenders respectively.

There were no significant differences in RR policy endorsement among the three survey versions,  $F(2, 905) = .05, p = .95$ . In contrast, IC policy endorsement was significantly different among the three survey versions,  $F(2, 958) = 9.19, p = .00$ . Post hoc analysis revealed that IC endorsement for those who completed the NCA version of the survey was significantly lower than IC policy endorsement for the other two survey versions.



**Table 4.20***Study 2 Attitude and Policy Subscales and Total Scores, by Survey Version*

Scale/Subscale	Survey Version: Mean (SD)			<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	CA	CC	NCA			
ATTSO F1	25.86 (5.96)	25.78 (5.75)	27.47 (5.53)	8.87	2, 973	.00*
ATTSO F2	13.04 (3.24)	12.67 (3.24)	13.59 (2.88)	6.88	2, 986	.00*
ATTSO F3	4.98 (2.29)	4.75 (2.20)	5.08 (2.16)	1.98	2, 986	.14
ATTSO total	44.03 (8.89)	43.15 (8.75)	46.10 (8.16)	9.74	2, 945	.00*
ATSOCJS C1	30.22 (6.80)	29.30 (6.88)	32.00 (6.92)	12.77	2, 952	.00*
ATSOCJS C2	33.03 (7.05)	32.86 (6.52)	34.60 (6.74)	6.33	2, 951	.00*
ATSOCJS total	63.23 (13.30)	62.22 (12.69)	66.74 (13.02)	10.17	2, 917	.00*
SDS	25.18 (8.78)	23.73 (9.18)	26.92 (9.58)	9.98	2, 976	.00*
FT	21.07 (20.48)	15.59 (18.38)	30.38 (19.31)	47.12	2, 938	.00* <sup>A</sup>
RR	65.29 (9.44)	65.04 (9.29)	65.18 (9.08)	.054	2, 905	.95
IC	43.08 (8.53)	42.94 (8.83)	40.38 (9.45)	9.19	2, 958	.00*

*Notes.*\* Denotes significant differences at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ;

<sup>A</sup> Denotes that all 3 groups were significantly different from one another

-Post hoc analysis with Tukeys-b tests revealed that with the exception of <sup>A</sup> in all significant cases, the NCA version score was significantly different from the other 2 scores.

As shown in Table 4.20 below, which provides significant differences among the binary totals of RR and IC policy endorsement, participants endorsed a similar amount of RR policies regardless of sex offender type,  $F(2, 905) = .07, p = .93$ . There was a significant difference among groups in terms of number of IC policies endorsed,  $F(2, 958) = 8.52, p = .00$ . On average, participants who completed the NCA version endorsed approximately one fewer IC policy than those who completed the other two versions.

**Table 4.21***Study 2 Differences in RR and IC Policy Scales Binary Total Scores, by Survey Version*

		<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig.
RR Policy	CA	297	12.66	3.37	2, 905	.07	.93
	CC	316	12.58	3.09			
	NCA	295	12.67	3.01			
IC Policy	CA	314	7.92	2.77	2, 958	8.52	.00
	CC	332	7.84	2.79			
	NCA	323	7.07*	3.04			

*Note.* \*Denotes the group which was significantly different following Tukeys-*b* test.

Finally, in examining predictor-criterion relationships of policy endorsement, multiple linear regression analyses were completed, in keeping with the same procedure under Objective 4.3.4. First, all demographic variables were correlated with RR and IC policy total scores and variables that were significantly correlated were included in a regression model. Next, a second regression analysis using only significantly associated demographic variables was calculated. Attitude measures were regressed against policy endorsement and scales that were uniquely associated were then entered into step 2 of a hierarchical regression model, to see if these specific aspects of attitudes contributed beyond demographic variables. Tables 4.22, 4.23 and 4.24 below include the final hierarchical regression models for the CA, CC and NCA offender specific versions respectively.

For the CA offender version, attitudes were significantly associated with RR policy endorsement beyond political orientation. This model accounted for 37% of the variance in RR policy. For the IC model as well, attitudes were significantly associated with IC policy endorsement beyond demographic variables. Overall, this final model accounted for approximately 63% of the variance in IC policy endorsement. Being a woman, more conservative leaning and having more negative attitudes (specifically negative beliefs and less willingness to engage with CA offenders) was associated with greater endorsement of IC policies.

**Table 4.22**

*Study 2 Hierarchical Multiple Regression with Demographic and Attitude measures –Contact Adult Offender Version*

Rehabilitation/Reintegration Policy				Incapacitation/Control Policy			
Model/Variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	Model/Variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Step 1				Step 1			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 252)				Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 259)			
Political Orientation	-.11	-.39	.00	Gender	4.89	.29	.00
				Political Orientation	-2.71	-.15	.01
				Children	.10	.40	.00
(Constant)	70.13		.00	Constant	34.76		.00
$R = .39, R^2 = .15, F(1, 250) = 45.65, p = .00$				$R = .51, R^2 = .26, F(3, 255) = 29.18, p = .01$			
Step 2				Step 2			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 252)				Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 259)			
Political Orientation	-.04	-.15	.01	Gender	1.89	.11	.01
ATSOCJS	.38	.53	.00	Political Orientation	.02	.09	.03
				Children	-.97	-.05	.18
				ATSOCS	-.34	-.53	.00
				SDS	-.23	-.24	.00
(Constant)	42.73		.00	(Constant)	67.71		.00
$R = .61, R^2 = .37, F(2, 249) = 73.22, p = .00$				$R = .79, R^2 = .63, F(5, 253) = 85.80, p = .00$			

Both models included a combination of significant demographic and attitude variables associated with policy endorsement ( $p < .05$ ) for CC offenders (Table 4.23); ( $R^2 = .30$ ,  $F(3, 258) = 36.38$ ,  $p = .00$  for RR policy, and  $R^2 = .55$ ,  $F(8, 235) = 36.18$ ,  $p = .00$  for IC policy). In the RR policy model, the only uniquely significant association was with the ATSOCJS scale. This overall model accounted for approximately 30% of the variance in RR policy endorsement. For the IC policy model, gender and parental status were the only uniquely associated demographic variables. These variables along with the affective and cognitive measures of attitudes uniquely accounted for variance in IC policy scores. Over 55% of the variance in IC policy endorsement was accounted for by this model.

**Table 4.23**

*Study 2 Hierarchical Multiple Regression with Demographic and Attitude measures –Contact Child Offender Version*

Rehabilitation/Reintegration Policy				Incapacitation/Control Policy			
Model/Variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	Model/Variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Step 1				Step 1			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 262)				Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 244)			
Ethnicity	-4.79	-.16	.01	Gender	5.12	.31	.00
Political Orientation			.00	Political Orientation	.06	.23	.00
				Children	-2.60	-.15	.01
				Ethnicity	2.95	.09	.10
				Education	-.92	-.10	.09
(Constant)	73.30		.00	(Constant)	37.37		.00
$R = .30, R^2 = .09, F(2, 259) = 12.38, p = .00$				$R = .47, R^2 = .22, F(5, 238) = 13.10, p = .00$			
Step 2				Step 2			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 262)				Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 244)			
Ethnicity	-1.73	-.06	.28	Gender	2.36	.14	.00
Political Orientation	-.02	-.09	.12	Political Orientation	.01	.05	.26
ATSOCJS	.35	.50	.00	Children	-1.79	-.10	.03
				Ethnicity	1.30	.04	.35
				Education	-.46	-.05	.27
				ATTSO	-.25	-.24	.00
				ATSOCJS	-.22	-.32	.00
				FT	-.09	-.20	.00
(Constant)	46.18		.01	(Constant)	67.77		.00
$R = .55, R^2 = .30, F(3, 258) = 36.38, p = .00$				$R = .74, R^2 = .55, F(8, 235) = 36.18, p = .00$			

Once again both combined demographic and attitude measure regression models were significant for the NCA offender version ( $R^2 = .47$ ,  $F(4, 239) = 52.01$ ,  $p = .00$  for RR policy and  $R^2 = .56$ ,  $F(5, 240) = 60.34$ ,  $p = .00$  for IC policy). Gender, political orientation and attitude measures were significant and unique predictor variables in the RR policy model and accounted for 47% of the variance in RR policy endorsement. Being a woman, more liberal leaning, and having more positive attitudes towards sex offenders was associated with RR policy endorsement. Gender, political orientation and attitude measures were also significant predictor variables in IC policy endorsement model. This model accounted for 56% of the variance in IC policy endorsement. Being a woman, more conservative leaning with more negative beliefs and a lack of willingness to engage with sex offenders was associated with IC policy endorsement.



**Table 4.24**

*Study 2 Hierarchical Multiple Regression with Demographic and Attitude measures –Non-Contact Adult Offender Version*

Rehabilitation/Reintegration Policy				Incapacitation/Control Policy			
Model/Variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	Model/Variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Step 1				Step 1			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 244)				Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 246)			
City Size	1.46	.16	.01	Gender	4.76	.25	.00
Gender	3.03	.17	.00	Political	.10	.36	.00
				Orientation			
Political	-.09	-.35	.00				
Orientation							
(Constant)	59.67		.00	(Constant)	29.22		.00
$R = .43, R^2 = .19, F(3, 240) = 18.26, p = .00$				$R = .43, R^2 = .19, F(2, 243) = 27.51, p = .00$			
Step 2				Step 2			
Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 244)				Prediction Model ( <i>n</i> = 246)			
City Size	.58	.06	.18	Gender	3.01	.16	.00
Gender	4.28	.24	.00	Political	.04	.15	.00
				Orientation			
Political	-.05	-.17	.00	ATTSO	-.23	-.20	.02
Orientation							
ATSOCJS	.39	.57	.00	ATSOCJS	-.26	-.36	.00
				SDS	-.15	-.16	.01
(Constant)	37.60		.00	(Constant)	66.53		.00
$R = .68, R^2 = .47, F(4, 239) = 52.01, p = .00$				$R = .75, R^2 = .56, F(5, 240) = 60.34, p = .00$			

### **4.3 Study 2 Discussion**

The current study aimed to identify Canadian public attitudes towards sex offenders and endorsement of diverse sex offender policies. The purpose was also to identify if attitudes and policy endorsement varied based on sex offender type, including contact-adult, contact-child, and non-contact adult offenders. The study examined the following main research objectives: 1) identifying attitudes of Canadians, 2) identifying what policies Canadians support, 3) investigating the relationship between demographic variables, attitudes, and policy endorsement, 4) examining if attitudes are associated with policy endorsement, over and above demographic variables, and 5) examining if public attitudes and policy endorsement vary based on sex offender type. The findings from this large-scale study will be examined below. In general, there were many similarities in findings between this study and Study 1, in terms of public attitudes, policy endorsement, and the relationship between attitudes and policy endorsement.

#### **4.3.1 Objective 1: Measurement of Attitudes towards Sex Offenders**

**4.3.1.1 Public attitudes.** In this study, attitudes were measured using four different scales which attempted to measure three different and interrelated components of attitudes, namely cognitive, affective, and behavioural.

Results indicate that attitudes were complex and varied in terms of their components. Attitudes, specifically the cognitive and behavioural components, were neutral and scores fell around the midpoint of these scales. These findings suggest that Canadians are undecided in their beliefs about sex offenders and sex offender treatment and neutral with regard to their willingness to interact with sex offenders in the community. In identifying particular item responses on these scales, most scores fell into the neutral and negative categories suggesting that Canadians had negative attitudes as well, although generally these attitudes were not very extreme. Canadians were uncertain about the utility of treatment and also believed that treatment should be mandated and forced upon all sex offenders regardless of their willingness to participate. Feelings towards sex offenders were significantly more negative than the cognitive and behavioural domains, and this is not unexpected, nor an uncommon finding. This overall result pattern in attitudes towards sex offenders is consistent with the first study of this research. Further, prior research has also found the affective component of attitudes to be most negative towards sex offenders (e.g. Willis et al., 2013). Although feelings were negative, it is promising to uncover that beliefs are not equally negative but more uncertain.

In examining the open ended items, once again an inferred treatment effect was found, in that the public reported recidivism rates for treatment offenders to be lower than for un-treatment offenders. This is consistent with previous research (Olver & Barlow, 2010). Canadians overall also estimated approximately a 54% rate of sexual recidivism for all three offender types, which is significantly higher than the recidivism rate reported in the literature of 14% over a 5 year period (Harris & Hanson, 2004). This overestimation of recidivism is a commonly endorsed sex offender myth that has also been found in other studies survey public attitudes (i.e. Brown et al., 2008; Olver & Barlow, 2010, etc.). There were also some differences apparent between the three sex offender types in terms of the average prison sentence and appropriate prison sentence estimates. Specifically, the public believed that CC offenders spending significant more time in prison than CA and NCA offenders, and that NCA offenders should spend significantly less time in prison than contact offenders. Further, the mean rate of appropriate sentence length for all three-offender types was at least double the length of time.

Results suggest that Canadians overall have neutral beliefs, negative feelings and do endorse some misconceptions about sex offenders. If the public is basing their policy endorsement on misguided beliefs about sex offenders, and as a result endorsing policies which impede effective reintegration, this needs to be addressed. A focus on educating the public in order to shift their beliefs and clarify misconceptions regarding recidivism rates and treatment efficacy for example, may be warranted. Preliminary research has found attitudes towards sex offenders can change as a result of psychoeducational interventions (Kleban & Jeglic, 2012) and informative media portrayals (Malinen et al., 2014), so these may be options for shifting public attitudes.

**4.3.1.2 Scale psychometrics.** Psychometric analysis of these attitude scales revealed mixed outcomes, which only somewhat supported the hypothesis. Results from this study confirm that all multi-item attitude measures (the ATTSO, ATSOCJS and SDS) are relatively reliable measures with internal consistency values ranging from good-excellent. This is consistent with validation studies and previous research using these tools (i.e., Olver & Barlow, 2010; Malinen et al., 2014; Willis et al., 2013; Wnuk et al., 2006).

Factor analysis (Principal Axis Factoring extraction) and PCA for the ATTSO and ATSOCJS scales respectively was conducted, however, did not result in the expected factor and component structures for these scales. In this study only a two factor solution was found for the

ATTSO scale, revealing one larger factor combining items that made up the original Treatment Ineffectiveness and Incapacitation scales, and another factor which consistent of items from the original Mandated Treatment scale. It is possible that this inconsistent factor structure is a result of the difference between the current sample and the original validation sample for the ATTSO, which was also a sample of university students just as in Study 1.

In Study 1, the ATSOCJS PCA revealed only a one-component solution consisting of 18 items. Items 7 and 8 did not load onto this single component. In examining these items, which both have to do with sexual offence detection (and which are nearly the reverse of one another), it is possible that they did not load onto this component because one's beliefs about sexual crime and offender detection are not necessarily associated with one's belief about sex offender rehabilitation. It is recommended that these particular items be substantially revised or possibly removed from the scale, and that further restructuring and validation be completed.

#### **4.3.2 Objective 2: Policy Endorsement, SOP Scale Psychometrics**

**4.3.2.1 Policy endorsement.** Similar to the first study and as hypothesized, Canadians endorsed a combination of both rehabilitative and punitive policies. In fact, the public was at least somewhat in favor of most of the 28 SOP scale items with some exceptions. Mears and colleagues (2008) also found that the members of the public in their sample were in favor of both rehabilitative and punitive treatments, which aligns with the current results. In this study, there was a small but significant negative relationship between endorsement of RR and IC policy suggesting that those who endorsed more RR policies also endorsed fewer IC policies, and vice versa. Although this association was significant, given the high level of endorsement of both types of policies this finding has less impact overall.

In terms of IC policies: most Canadians supported offender registration, over 90% were in favor of residence restrictions for offenders who commit offences against children, and approximately 75% of Canadians were in favor of GPS use for offenders on parole/probation. Canadians did not support all policies equally across sex offender types, and there was some differentiation in the amount of support of certain IC policies. The public was in favor of long term sex offender registration, although significantly fewer Canadians were in favor of long term registration for NCA offenders. They were also in favor of the broad enactment of DO and LTO legislation for sex offenders (although fewer Canadians agreed this should occur for NCA offenders). Most Canadians also did not believe that jail time was necessarily warranted for all

NCA offenders, and less than half of the sample were in favor of offenders who had committed a non-contact offence serving prison time, in contrast to offenders convicted of contact offences. Interestingly, less than half of Canadians were in favor of public registries for all three types of sex offenders including CC. This lack of public endorsement for this specific policy is in contrast with the former Conservative government's recently introduced High Risk Child Sex Offender Database Act, which granted the Canadian public access to a high risk child sex offender database (Tougher Penalties for Child Predators Act, 2015). Only half of Canadians were in favor of minimum mandatory sentences, which were also part of the recent CCC amendments as a result of the Safe Streets and Community Act (2012).

Although it is likely unsurprising to many that Canadians were in support of many IC policies, perhaps most interesting was the nearly equivalent support for rehabilitative policies for all three sex offender types. Canadians on average, were in favor of all of the RR policies. RR policy endorsement did not vary by sex offender type. Canadians were overwhelmingly in favor of custody and community sex offender treatment programs and additional community supports for sex offenders including COSA availability for high risk offenders. Programs to assist offenders to find employment and housing were also well supported. Over 91% of Canadians were also in favor of preventative treatment programs to help those sexually attracted to children and feel they may act on it. These results are encouraging and illustrate that, despite strong negative feelings towards all such offenders and in particular CC offenders, the public still supports many policies that are rehabilitative in nature, for all offender types.

These findings indicate that Canadians support both rehabilitative policies and punitive control oriented policies. Notably, the IC policies which received the lowest endorsement (public registration and mandatory minimum sentencing) were among those which were recently enacted in Canadian legislation. Similar to recent research conducted in Pennsylvania (King & Roberts, 2015), this suggests that current legislation may not accurately reflect public opinion. Overall, it is clear that the public is in support of a variety of policies to address the problem of sexual offending. Given that the majority of the IC policies the public supports are already well in effect (e.g., offender registration, custodial sentences, DO and LTO legislation and the use of GPS tracking), a focus on balancing out these policies with more RR approaches is warranted.

**4.3.2.2 SOP scale psychometrics.** As hypothesized, psychometric analysis of the SOP scale revealed positive outcomes supporting the hypothesis that this scale is a generally reliable

tool to measure endorsement of sex offender policies. PCA revealed a two component solution for the SOP scale, as hypothesized, with the majority of items grouping with their respective policy type as intended. Once again however, items 4 and 5 did not load onto either component. It is clear that these items are problematic and possibly conceptually confusing; as a result they were not included in any of the analyses involving total scores for the RR and IC scales. It is recommended that these items be removed from the scale or substantially reconstructed. These findings do suggest that the RR and IC subscales are reliable scales of respective policies, and given its successful use with a large and heterogeneous representative sample, these findings provide validation for this newly developed tool beyond study 1. Nonetheless, further validation is recommended.

### **4.3.3 Objective 3: Relationships among Study Factors**

**4.3.3.1 Relationships among attitude measures.** As hypothesized and similar to study 1, all four measures of attitudes were significantly and positively correlated with one another. Once again the ATTSO and ATSOCJS scales were most strongly related, and this is in keeping with the purpose of these scales, which is to be measures of beliefs about sex offender treatment and rehabilitation (Olver & Barlow, 2010; Wnuk et al., 2006). Beliefs and behaviours were the most strongly related attitude components, and feelings and behaviours were only moderately correlated. Given that the most negative component of attitudes was the affective one, this suggests that feelings may not necessarily impact how one interacts with this group. It is important to note however that the current research includes only a proxy measure of behaviour rather than a measurement of true behaviour, and this warrants further study.

**4.3.3.2 Relationship among attitude measures and policy endorsement.** As hypothesized, attitudes were also related to policy endorsement. In line with previous research (Shackley et al., 2013), more negative attitudes (including beliefs, feelings, and an unwillingness to interact with sex offenders) were significantly associated with IC policy endorsement. The current results also found that more positive attitudes (including more positive beliefs about sex offender treatment and rehabilitation, more positive feelings, and willingness to interact with sex offenders) were significantly associated with RR policy endorsement, and vice versa.

Of the three attitude components measured, beliefs were most strongly associated with both types of policy endorsement. Given that policies are defined as principles which are intended to express the general will of the people (Kerr & Seymour, 2010), it is not surprising to

find the relationship between attitudes, which express a general degree of favor or disfavor towards an attitude object (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) and policy. This significant relationship between attitudes and policy endorsement suggests that attitudes may be precursors of policy endorsement. Therefore, a focus on changing public attitudes and correcting misconceptions about sex offenders may be warranted because if it is effective, it may also result in a change in policy endorsement.

**4.3.3.3 Relationship among demographic variables, attitudes and policy endorsement.** In contrast to the pilot study, there were a number of demographic variables in this study which were related to both attitudes and policy endorsement. As hypothesized, higher educational attainment and more liberal political orientation was associated with more positive attitudes, more RR policy endorsement, and with less IC policy endorsement; political orientation showed the strongest relationship with these variables. Previous researchers have also found education level to be associated with attitudes (e.g. Mears et al., 2013; Shackley et al., 2013; Willis et al., 2013) however political orientation has not been found to significantly predict attitudes in the past (Mears et al., 2008; Olver & Barlow, 2010). It is possible that these previous null findings were as a result of smaller and more homogenous samples, in comparison to the current study. Those living in larger urban settings also had more positive attitudes and endorsed fewer IC policies. Similarly, Button and colleagues (2003) found that respondents who lived in closer proximity to sex offenders, which presumably would be those living in densely populated areas, viewed electronic monitoring more negatively than those who lived further away. Finally, and perhaps not unexpectedly, those who knew a sex offender were more willing to engage with sex offenders. This aligns with the trends in Harper and Hogue's (2015) recent UK finding that those who knew a sex offender had less negative views towards them.

Being a parent, female and identifying as non-White was associated with having more negative attitudes and endorsing significantly more IC policies; parental status and gender showed the strongest relationships with these variables. In this sample, being older was associated with endorsing more IC policy; however, age was not significantly associated with any measure of attitudes. These findings coincide with other research that has found women (Harper & Hogue, 2015; Malinen et al., 2013; Willis et al., 2013) and parents to report more negative attitudes towards sex offender rehabilitation (Brown et al., 2008), although notably other researchers have found no difference in attitudes as a result of parental status (e.g.,

Shackley et al., 2013 and Willis et al., 2013). Further research is required to clarify this relationship.

Some variables such as household income and relationship status had no significant relationships with attitudes or policy endorsement which is consistent with past research (Brown et al., 2008). Working with sex offenders was also not related to one's attitudes or policy endorsement, in contrast with previous findings which suggest that those with more direct contact with sex offenders have more positive attitudes (Craun & Theorit, 2009).

Overall, gender, educational level, political orientation, parental status and ethnicity were relevant variables associated with Canadian attitudes and policy endorsement. Many of the findings are in keeping with previous research, with some exceptions. It is important to again note that there have been inconsistent findings in this area (Willis et al., 2010). This may be due to the diversity in samples because this research has been conducted in various countries worldwide, which makes comparing and drawing conclusive patterns more challenging.

#### **4.3.4 Objective 4: Predictor-Criterion Relationships of Policy Endorsement**

**4.3.4.1 Demographic variables and policy endorsement.** Results from multiple regression analyses revealed that particular demographic variables were significantly associated with policy endorsement. Generally, fewer demographic variables were significantly associated with RR policy, compared with IC policy endorsement. Being more liberal leaning was the only uniquely demographic variable for RR policy endorsement. For the IC policy model, being female, non-White, less educated, and more conservative and having children were demographic characteristics that all significantly and uniquely associated with IC policy endorsement. In contrast to study 1, results from this study revealed several additional demographic variables which were significantly associated with policy endorsement and this may be a result of the variability present in the current sample. Once again, none of variables which related to the degree of closeness to a sex offender, were uniquely associated with policy endorsement.

**4.3.4.2 Attitudes and policy endorsement.** As hypothesized, results from multiple regression analyses involving attitude measures suggested that attitudes are associated with policy endorsement. Given the significant relationship among attitude measures themselves, for RR policy, not all attitude measures were uniquely associated with policy endorsement. More positive beliefs about sex offenders, as well as more positive feelings were each associated with more RR policy endorsement. All four attitude scales were uniquely associated with IC policy



endorsement and more specifically, negative beliefs, feelings, and unwillingness to engage with sex offenders, were associated with more IC policy endorsement. Once again, this finding is in line with past research which has found that persons with more negative attitudes were supportive of more punitive approaches to sex offender management (Shackley et al., 2013).

**4.3.4.3 Demographic variables, attitudes and of policy endorsement.** Results from hierarchical multiple regressions revealed that attitudes explained significant unique variance in both types of policies, when controlling for demographic variables. Political orientation and attitudes both uniquely accounted for variance in RR policy endorsement. Positive attitudes along with more liberal leaning political orientation, were significantly associated with more RR policy endorsement. Gender, parental status, education level, political ideation and attitude measures each were significantly and uniquely associated with IC policy endorsement. Negative attitudes, including all aspects of attitudes, along with being female, having children, having less educational attainment, and being more conservative, was associated with IC policy endorsement. In contrast to study 1, in this Canadian sample, demographic variables remained significantly associated with policy endorsement, even after the attitude measures were added to the model. This finding is likely a result of the large and heterogeneous sample included and indicates that there are a variety of unique contributors which predict sex offender policy endorsement among Canadians.

Overall these results suggest that one's attitudes are associated with policy endorsement, and these combined models including both demographic variables and attitudes can be informative in helping to understand the variables that influence particular policy endorsement. It is notable that overall, more attitudes and demographic variables as measured by this study were uniquely associated with IC policy, in comparison to RR policy. This finding suggests that perhaps the variables which are uniquely associated with endorsement of rehabilitative policy were not captured as well as those of IC policy endorsement. Further, it is indicative that different variables are associated with endorsement of different types of policies. Importantly, this study was correlational rather than causal, and as a result it is not possible to conclude which variables are responsible for policy endorsement, and this may be an important area of further research.

#### **4.3.5 Objective 5: Identifying Differences among Survey Versions**

Results suggest that in fact attitudes and policy endorsement did differ based on sex offender type as hypothesized. The biggest differentiation was found between non-contact and contact sex offenders, with attitudes (as measured by all scales) significantly more positive towards NCA offenders, as compared to the other two types. Between the CA and CC groups, there was only one significant difference found, in feelings towards these offender types; feelings towards CC offenders were significantly more negative, followed by feelings for CA offenders. These findings are consistent with previous research which has found that attitudes are most negative towards child offenders (Kernsmith et al., 2009) and generally are nuanced and vary depending on offender and offence characteristics (King & Roberts, 2015; Mears et al., 2008).

In looking at differences among sex offender types in policy endorsement, as previously mentioned, only IC policy endorsement varied as a result of offender type. The public endorsed significantly fewer punitive policies for the non-contact offenders, compared to both types of contact offenders. This is consistent with findings from King and Roberts (2015) which indicated that public opinion about prison sentence length and registration requirements varied based on (among other variables) the seriousness of offence. Interestingly RR policy endorsement did not change as a result of sex offender type. These results have promising implications for future policy. These data suggest that Canadians support rehabilitative approaches to sex offender management with all types of sex offenders and the results point to less overgeneralization of punitive policies for all sex offenders, which is keeping with researcher recommendations to policy makers (Lobanov-Rostovsky & Harris, 2016).

Investigating predictor-criterion relationships for RR and IC policy endorsement among the three survey versions revealed some differences. For RR policy, fewer variables accounted for unique variance in the overall model for all three types of sex offenders. Having a more liberal political orientation along with more positive beliefs about sex offender treatment and rehabilitation were variables associated with RR policy endorsement for CA offenders. For CC offenders, more positive beliefs about sex offenders were significantly associated with RR policy endorsement. Finally, for NCA offenders, being a woman, more liberal leaning, and having more positive beliefs about sex offenders was associated with RR policy endorsement.

For IC policy endorsement, being a woman, having a more conservative political orientation and having more negative attitudes (including beliefs and an unwillingness to engage

with contact adult sex offenders), were uniquely associated variables in the CA and NCA offender models. For CC offenders being female, having children and having negative attitudes (including beliefs and feelings) towards sex CC offenders, was significantly and uniquely associated with IC policy endorsement. This suggests that there are broad differences in predictor-criterion relationships of policy among adult and child offenders. It is unsurprising that parental status would be a relevant variable in the model related to child offenders, particularly policies which are punitive. All three models which identified variables associated with IC policy were significant and explained over 50% of variance in this type of policy. The largest model which explained the most variance in IC policy endorsement was for the CA offender.

There are some variations in variables associated with policy endorsement as a result of sex offender type. Political orientation remained a significant demographic variable which was associated with both policy types in CA and NCA offenders, and gender was significantly associated with endorsement of IC policy for all three offender types, as well as for RR policy endorsement for NCA offenders. This result is unsurprising given the above discussed relationship between gender and these policy scores.

These findings are similar to the overall group findings of variables that are associated with policy endorsement, although they do reveal and reinforce once again the differences that exist among different types of sex offenders.

#### **4.4 Study 2 Strengths and Limitations**

It is important to note some of the limitations as well as strengths of the current study. Although this study was intended to sample all Canadians, it did not include significant representation from the province of Quebec because the survey was not translated into French. As a result, the findings are likely only generalizable to English speaking Canadians living outside the province of Quebec. Attitudes and policy endorsement of French Canadians remains an important area of future study. It is noteworthy that although the sample was intended to be representative, all of the research was conducted online, which did exclude Canadians who did not have Internet access. Generally, the sample also underrepresented non-White and lower income Canadians.

Similar to other research in this area, despite being randomly recruited, participants essentially self-selected for participation in the study, and so it is unknown whether survey participants differed in significant ways from non-participants (Levenson et al., 2014). However,

the manner of sampling and relative similarities of the sample with the most recent Canadian census data does provide some support for the approximate representativeness of the sample. Furthermore, and as mentioned previously, not all provinces/territories were sampled equally, and therefore this study was not able to conduct any comparisons between provinces/territories.

The current study involved comparing attitudes and policy endorsement regarding three different types of sex offenders and significant differences in attitude and policy endorsement were found. While the current study does provide a more nuanced understanding of attitudes and policy endorsement due to the fact that not all sex offenders were grouped together as compared to most research in this area, the study was still limited to these three offender types. Future research involving other types of sex offenders, and particularly non-contact child offenders (i.e., offenders who are found in possession of child pornography) is warranted. This research would help identify what element differentiates attitudes more: if the offender has a child victim, or if they commit a non-contact sexual offence, or possibly both. This study also asked about sex offender types as a between-subjects measure, and it would be interesting to see if results differed if each individual person was asked about each of the various types of sex offenders.

In spite of certain limitations, the current study was the first large-scale investigation into Canadian attitudes on this topic and includes the largest known sample surveyed about sex offenders and sex offender policy in Canada. The sample of this study is not only large but representative geographically of English speaking Canadians, and thus conclusions about English speaking Canadian attitudes and policy endorsement can be drawn with greater confidence.

#### **4.5 Study 2 Conclusion**

The current study provides the first large scale survey of Canadian attitudes and sex offender policy endorsement. Attitudes towards sex offenders as a whole were not generally negative, similar to results from the first study, although attitudes varied based on sex offender type. In particular, attitudes (especially feelings) were most negative towards CC offenders and most positive towards NCA offenders. Policy endorsement also varied somewhat based on sex offender type. Canadians endorsed fewer IC policies for the NCA offenders compared with the other two groups; however, there was no differentiation among groups in terms of RR policy endorsement. Attitudes and demographic variables such as political orientation) were also significantly associated with RR and IC policy endorsement.

The results from this study suggest that Canadians are supportive of a diverse range of sex offender policies, and although the public had more negative feelings towards particular types of offenders, they endorsed RR policies to the same extent. In contrast to popular wisdom, these results indicate that Canadians would support RR policies and these findings have positive implications regarding the future of sex offender management, and beyond that, public safety in Canada. Rather than maintaining a focus on the enactment of punitive policies, which have been found to not impact recidivism, policy makers are encouraged to implement community based rehabilitative approaches to support successful sex offender reintegration and reduce reoffending, with the support of the Canadian public.

## CHAPTER 5: General Discussion and Conclusions

The current research program was primarily exploratory in nature and provides important information regarding Canadian attitudes towards sex offenders and public endorsement of sex offender policy. Generally, the two studies' results overlapped significantly and may be helpful in directing future sex offender policy endeavours.

### **5.1 Attitudes towards Sex Offenders**

Results from both studies indicate that Canadian attitudes towards sex offenders, and in particular their beliefs about sex offender treatment and rehabilitation are relatively neutral. Although neutral, Canadians still endorse some misconceptions about sex offenders (e.g., estimating high rates of recidivism, demonstrating a lack of faith in or general uncertainty about sex offender treatment and rehabilitation), generally they are not willing to engage significantly with sex offenders in the community, and have negative feelings towards them. Given that most people receive their information about sex offenders from the media (Brown et al., 2008; Centre for Sex Offender Management, 2010; Thakker, 2012), which often presents misconceptions and sensationalizes stories about these offenders, these findings are not unexpected. These findings align with previous research that has found that sex offenders are a highly stigmatized group (Evans & Cubellis, 2015) and that the public feels particularly negative towards them (Malinen et al., 2014). Attitudes (specifically the cognitive and behavioural components) did vary based on sex offender type, and were more positive for NCA offenders compared to CA and CC offenders. Unsurprisingly, Canadians had significantly more negative feelings towards CC offenders, and less negative feelings towards CA and NCA offenders respectively.

Attitudes are complex and multifaceted, and the current studies highlighted that there exists variability among the different components of attitudes, just as past research has found (i.e., Malinen et al., 2014; Willis et al., 2013). The results overall are promising for those interested in developing effective policy, in that attitudes were not excessively negative. As previously discussed, they consisted primarily of uncertain beliefs about sex offenders and also some misconceptions, which may be more amenable to change especially with education on the topic. In fact there is preliminary evidence that the cognitive component of attitudes towards sex offenders can be changed through the use of brief psychoeducational interventions (Kleban & Jeglic, 2012). Given that public attitudes have important implications for reintegration of sex offenders and for the successful execution of policies used to manage sex offenders, future

studies could examine impact of education on the reduction of myths and perceptions of risk associated with sex offenders (Harper & Hogue, 2015).

## **5.2 Demographic Variables, Attitudes, and Policy Endorsement**

Particular demographic variables were significantly related to attitude and policy endorsement in both studies. In study 1, significant variables that varied with attitudes and endorsement of policies were gender, ethnicity, age, and political orientation. In study two, there were several more variables that varied significantly with both attitude and policy measures including: age, gender, educational level, political orientation, city size, parental status, and knowing a victim and sex offender. The hypothesis that political orientation, gender, education level, and level of contact with a victim or offender, would be related to and associated with attitudes and policy endorsement was somewhat supported with these findings, however not all variables were significant. As previously discussed (see specific discussion sections in chapters 3 and 4) these findings were somewhat in keeping with existing research, although generally it has been difficult to identify reliable patterns in this research area (Willis et al., 2010).

In study 1, ethnicity was the only demographic variable accounting for unique variance in RR policy endorsement, and political orientation was the only variable accounting for unique variance in IC policy endorsement. Once attitudes were included in the final models however, these demographic variables no longer accounted for unique variance in policy endorsement. In study 2, uniquely associated variables included political orientation for RR policy, and gender, education, ethnicity, political orientation and parental status for IC policy. In the final models which included attitude measures, political orientation remained significantly and uniquely associated with RR policy, and gender, education, political orientation and parental status remained significantly and uniquely associated with IC policy along with attitude measures. These findings indicate that demographic variables were more relevant in the second study compared with the first, and this is likely as a result of sample composition (i.e., there was greater demographic variability in study 2). The combination of demographic variables and attitudes in accounting for variance in policy endorsement was stronger in explaining IC policy endorsement, compared with RR policy.

Demographic variables which appeared significantly and uniquely related to both attitude and policy endorsement in both studies included gender and political orientation. Women who were more conservative leaning held more negative attitudes and also endorsed more IC policies.

The current research found that women were also more likely to support both types of policies. These findings are congruent with past research which has found that women had more negative attitudes, endorsed more stereotypical beliefs/myths about sex offenders (Harper & Hogue, 2015; Malinen et al., 2014, Willis et al., 2013) and were more supportive of offender registries and contact restrictions, compared to male respondents (Sahl & Keene, 2012). These gender differences may be explained by differences in sexual experiences; for example, women are more likely to experience unsolicited sexual attention and to be victims of sexual violence (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

In study 2, additional variables including being a parent and less educated were significantly associated with IC policy endorsement along with measures of attitudes. Those with a more liberal political orientation endorsed more RR policy, which is not surprising given that RR policies are treatment and reintegration oriented and would align with more liberal beliefs. This relationship was also found in the reverse (i.e., that those with more conservative political orientations endorsed more IC policies). This finding is consistent with past research that has found educational attainment to be a significant and relevant variable related to attitudes and views of sex offender policies (e.g., Brown et al., 2008; Shackley et al., 2013; Willis et al., 2013). Consistent with some previous findings, higher educational attainment, not having children, and being more liberal leaning were variables associated with more positive attitudes towards sex offenders (Harper & Hogue, 2015; Malinen et al., 2014 etc.) and were associated with RR policy endorsement.

Certain variables had no significant unique relationship with policy endorsement in either study, including relationship status, income, and generally degree of closeness to a sex offender or victim. It is possible that given the oversampling of higher income members of the public, and the low number of persons who did have direct contact to offenders, there was little variability in some of these items, which may have accounted for the null findings. In comparing the three versions of the survey, there was some variation in terms of which demographic variables were uniquely associated with policy endorsement. This suggests that demographic variables have unique and varied relationships with policy endorsement, depending on the type of offender inquired about. More research about these relationships is warranted.

Given the variability in findings from previous research looking at demographic variables and attitudes (Willis et al., 2010), it has been difficult to draw strong conclusions across studies.



The current research does provide information regarding relevant demographic variables for English speaking Canadians that are related to attitudes and uniquely associated with policy endorsement.

### **5.3 Study Instruments**

In this research, attitudes were measured using four different scales, including a one-item measure of feelings towards sex offenders. The multi-item attitude scales used (ATTSO, ATSOCJS, and SDS) were found to be reliable measures. Overall, these four different measures allowed for the exploration of different components of attitudes in order to gain a deeper understanding of how Canadians think, feel and act towards sex offenders. These measures were significantly related to one another which provides evidence of convergent validity of these scales.

Analysis of the structure of the ATTSO and ATSOCJS scales in both studies suggested that the factors and components in these scales may not be as stable as the developers hoped. The ATTSO factor structure was replicated in study 1. In study 2 however, only two factors were found; one factor was comprised of all items on the original Incapacitation and Treatment Effectiveness factors, and the other factor found was the Mandated Treatment factor. With regard to the ATSOCJS, some revision is suggested given that only a one-component solution was found in both studies and several scale items did not load significantly onto this component. These results suggest that the ATSOCJS scale, in its current state, is not a two-component scale, and may be best reserved for young adult, university student populations. Further validation is required.

The current research also made use of a newly created measure of sex offender policy, the SOP scale, and specifically the subscales of RR and IC based policy. These subscales were found to be reliable, and in both studies two components that contained theoretically related items that grouped together broadly under RR and IC policies, were found. The SOP scale and subscales were also found to be significantly and positively related to measures of attitudes towards sex offenders and scores on attitude measures were associated with policy endorsement. These results provide emerging evidence of concurrent validity of this scale.

### **5.4 Policy Endorsement and Prediction**

The results from this research suggest, that similar to attitudes, Canadian support for sex offender policy is also multifaceted and varied. The findings indicate that Canadians support

policies which are rehabilitative in nature, as well as control and incapacitation oriented policies. These findings are in line with past research which has found that if provided a variety of policies, which include both punitive and rehabilitative approaches to sex offender management, the public supports a combination of approaches (Brown et al., 2008).

Results also indicate that support for RR policies did not differ as a result of type of sex offender, suggesting that regardless of whether attitudes and feelings towards the three offenders differed, feelings did not impact one's willingness to support RR policies even for those offenders who are most feared and disliked.

This research also reveals that different factors associated with IC and RR policy endorsement. It may be that Canadian's endorsement of punitive policies is driven by the public's negative feelings towards these offenders and a desire for punishment, while at the same time, beliefs and political orientation are more important in influencing endorsement of rehabilitative approaches. Put another way, it appears possible that support for RR and support for IC policies do not exist on opposite ends of a single continuum. Instead, determining one's support for these two types of policies requires two separate questions – knowledge of one does not necessarily follow from knowledge of the other.

In both studies, there was a stronger and clearer relationship between attitudes and IC policy endorsement. More negative attitudes had a stronger association with IC policy endorsement than more positive attitudes had with RR policy endorsement. It could be argued then, that negative attitudes had a stronger impact overall, than did positive attitudes. This finding is aligned with previous research that has found that negative information, which can be cognitive or affective in nature, has a greater impact on global evaluations than equally relevant positive information (Ajzen, 2001). A next step for the research then, could involve targeting these negative attitudes to identify if this would have an impact on endorsement of IC policies.

### **5.5 Overall Research Limitations**

The current research program did have some limitations. This research intended to measure attitudes broadly by using tools that attempted to capture the cognitive, affective and behavioural components. It is important to acknowledge that the behavioural measure of attitudes was a proxy scale measuring behavioural intentions, and no actual behaviours were measured over the course of this research. Future work with a focus on how the public truly interacts with sex offenders in the community is important and warranted.

Furthermore, in this study, there were no specific tests of the construct validity of these attitude measures to ensure that they provided valid operationalization of the three domains and the underlying attitude construct. Although these scales were positively correlated with one another, these significant relationships (beyond possibly reflecting the measurement of an underlying attitude construct), may also reflect shared sources of error in the measurement of the construct, especially if one scale informed the other. It is important to note however, that despite this limitation, there is more than just face validity evidence for the measures given that they were meaningfully associated with policy endorsement (and often uniquely so), which is an index of criterion related concurrent validity.

This research investigated variables that are associated with policy endorsement and found that particular demographic characteristics as well as scores on attitude measures were associated with policy endorsement. It is important to clarify that the research was purely correlational in nature, and therefore which variables cause one to endorse particular policies remains an empirical question. Future research investigating this relationship more directly, perhaps by starting with some of the variables identified through this research, would be informative.

This research program made use of a newly created measure of sex offender policies, the SOP scale, which had not been previously used. This SOP scale grouped policies broadly speaking into RR and IC policies, with the exception of two items, which were not included in the subscale total scores as a result. It is recommended that further validation of this scale be completed and that these two items in particular be modified if they are to be included in any future use of the scale, or be removed from the scale completely.

Policies were divided into two broad groups for the SOP scale for the purposes of the current research; however, as mentioned previously, some policies are not purely punitive or lacking in evidence, and may have a rehabilitative impact as well. The SOP scale also did not include all possible policies, but rather was intended to cover a broad collection of relevant policies. This was intentional, in order to keep the scale itself as easy to complete as possible (although it did still include 28 items), but it may be considered on some level a coarse measure of policy specific to sex offenders.

This research relied on self-report data and did not include any measures of social desirability, which may possibly have limited the validity of the results. However, the nature of

the subject area makes this less likely, given that it was not inquiring about personal victimization for example, but rather about beliefs and feelings towards sex offenders and support for policies. Furthermore, the survey data were all collected online and all data were anonymous and could not be linked back to any particular individual, which helped to reduce these issues.

### **5.6 Future Directions**

This quantitative research is helpful in gaining a broad understanding of Canadian attitudes and sex offender policy endorsement. Research that is more qualitative in nature may be helpful in further identifying and understanding public attitudes and views on this topic. This research program found that Canadians have more negative attitudes towards CC offenders as well as endorsed more IC policies for both CC and CA offenders, compared to NCA offenders. Future research could investigate the causes of these more negative attitudes towards child offenders; for example, are these feelings based on misconceptions about this subgroup or is there any relationship with danger or risk?

Particularly given that victims of sexual crimes have been used to justify various policies (e.g., Adam Walsh for the AWA or SORNA legislation in the U.S. and Christopher Stephenson for the OSOR in Canada) future work identifying what victims view as the best approach to sex offender management would also be interesting to conduct. This research may provide more legitimacy to a focus on rehabilitation, rather than solely punitive policies. The research that currently exists suggests that victims would not be supportive of more punitive policies targeting sex offenders (Bandy, 2014). According to victims, policies which would serve them best are those which promote open communication about victimization, encourage prevention and accurate information to be disseminated and programs which would provide services both to offenders and victims themselves (Bandy, 2014).

An important next step would be to investigate the Canadian public's understanding of the efficacy of diverse sex offender policies and identify if this knowledge may impact endorsement. Similar to prior research completed by Koon-Magnin (2015), it could be that like Americans, Canadians would still support the punitive policies because they have symbolic benefit; however, this remains an empirical question. It is notable that in the current study, one of the only two policies not supported by more than half of Canadians was public registration -

an IC policy. This finding may suggest that Canadians do not find much value in this type of legislation, even symbolically speaking.

The current research study was correlational in nature and did not examine any causal relationships. Nonetheless, given that the findings indicate that negative attitudes were associated with less endorsement of RR and more endorsement of IC policy, a next step would be to examine experimentally if attitudes as measured by these study instruments, can be altered. The current findings suggest that beliefs had the strongest associations with policy endorsement, thus this may be a good starting point. Similar to Malinen and colleagues (2014) and Kleban and Jeglic (2012), researchers could investigate the impact of disseminating knowledge about sex offenders and policy efficacy in a small group discussion format, and compare scores on attitude scales such as the ATTSO and ATSOCJS before and after, to identify if beliefs about sex offenders changed as a result.

Continuing to focus on the multidimensional nature of attitudes is also important. For instance, do interventions that primarily involve information giving and education alter only one's beliefs about sex offenders, or do they also impact how one feels and is willing to interact with these offenders? Are different interventions required to alter one's feelings towards sex offenders? Armstrong, Miller and Griffin (2015) note that formation of attitudes towards sex offenders is often due to an emotional reaction and they suggest that if the hope is to change this affective reaction, focusing on a message that is emotionally persuasive may serve best. Therefore, if the intention is to alter how one feels towards sex offenders, an experimental manipulation that targets one's emotions, such as the impact of a TV feature portraying how the family of a registered sex offender is impacted by the legislation, would be appropriate. If attitudes can be altered, further research would be necessary to determine whether altering attitudes casually influences policy endorsement.

Researchers have also found that public opinions can be influenced by the presentation of research and accurate information. A recent Canadian study highlights the promise of accurate information on changing public views of criminal justice policy (Bousefield, Cook, & Roesch, 2014). Researchers surveyed the public and criminal justice professionals on their opinions regarding the efficacy of the omnibus crime bill, Bill C-10, The Safe Streets and Community Act (2012), which, as discussed previously, was a recently ratified act that increased both the use of mandatory minimum sentences and the duration of incarceration for certain mandatory minimum

sentences already in effect in Canada. This act has been criticized for being punitive and not being evidence-based (Barbaree et al., 2012). Both legal and mental health professionals, as well as members of the public were surveyed on their opinions of this bill. Despite previous differences in opinions between the public and professionals, public views were more aligned with professional opinions (which were more critical and less supportive of the bill) following the presentation of information grounded in research. This study highlights the relevance of research and the important impact of educating Canadians on policy matters (Bousefield et al., 2014). If public opinions can change following exposure to research, this may result in a shift of support for certain policies, and thus may ultimately lead to changes in policy. Providing the public with accurate and accessible information, could allow them to become more informed citizens and voters, and also more meaningfully involved in the process of creating and enacting public policy. Future research can investigate whether or not support for certain policies can be altered if one is presented with research evidence about the impact of different policy on recidivism.

Finally, it is important to discuss the impact that language and terminology has on the issue of public attitudes towards sex offenders and support for various policies. Attitudes stem from the label of sex offender (Button et al., 2013) and it is possible that the participants who took part in the current study were impacted by the terms used in the survey. Harris and Socia (2014) found that when the term sex offender was used, it was associated with increased public attitude certainty and the valence framing effect (when negative framing is used, it increases attitude certainty and intensity). When more neutral language was used (i.e., people who have committed crimes of a sexual nature), this effect was not found. It is recommended that future researchers are mindful of the terminology used in their studies.

Researchers have noted that language is also critical and influential in terms of policy (Button et al., 2013). Therefore, it is recommended that policy makers be aware of the impact of terminology and attempt to include more neutral language whenever possible. It is also recommended that the public be made aware of changes in language and legislation, because this has the potential to change public attitudes and has previously been successful. Roberts, Grossman and Gebotys (1996) discuss the impact of the Canadian's government's intense media and public legal information campaigns initiative to educate the public on rape reform legislation in the 1980s. One aim of this legislation was to change public attitudes towards crimes involving

sexual violence. These researches noted that the intensity of these educational campaigns and magnitude of effort put into place by the government in order to inform the public about the changes in legislation, from rape to offences of sexual aggression including sexual assault and aggravated sexual assault, played an important role in public awareness about the reform. The use of more neutral language is also recommended when engaging with other professionals and the news media. Given that the term sex offender can evoke many subconscious associations (Harris & Socia, 2014), this also has ethical implications for sensationalized media portrayals, which have the potential to negatively impact reintegration (Corăbian & Hogan, 2012).

### **5.6.1 Dissemination of Findings**

The ultimate goal of this research is to support the successful reintegration of sexual offenders and thereby assisting in the promotion of Canadian public safety. It is intended that the findings from this research program not only be presented to academic scholars within a university setting, but also professionals involved in the treatment and assessment of offenders, law and policy makers, and the media. Venues such as: the annual conference of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA), and the International Treatment for Sexual Abusers (IATSO), which bring together a diverse group of professionals working with sex offenders from around the world; as well as other broader conferences such as the International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services (IAFMHS) annual conference, the Academic and Health Policy Conference on Correctional Health, and Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) annual conference, which bring together mental health professionals working across different areas of psychology and health; and finally interdisciplinary conferences such as the International Academy of Law and Mental Health and the American Psychology-Law Society (AP-LS) annual conference, would be appropriate audiences.

### **5.7 Policy Implications and Recommendations**

In order for sex offender reintegration to be effective, social and community support, as well as policies that are grounded in research, are essential. Community reintegration for sex offenders is challenging for a variety of reasons, including negative community sentiment (often rooted in a lack of basic understanding), and the application of incapacitation and control oriented policies, which may even be well intended but are not well informed or well supported (Bumby, Solomon, Whitmore, & Miodownik, 2016). Interestingly, the ratification of many punitive sex offender policies historically has been the result of single rare incidents involving

sexual crimes against children, which were profiled in the media (Lobonov-Rostovsky & Harris, 2016; McCartan & Kemshall, 2015), and yet the policies enacted in response to these singular and thankfully uncommon events, are often intended to be wide-ranging and over inclusive. Rather than widening the net on broadly implemented one-size fits all punitive policies to manage sex offenders, such as the AWA in the U.S. (Harris et al., 2010), an individualized approach to sex offender management is recommended (McCartan & Kemshall, 2015).

The results from this research program indicate that Canadians do have a range of attitudes and feelings towards different types of sex offenders and that they also endorsed IC policies differentially based on sex offender type. This distinction in attitudes and policy endorsement among members of the public suggests that the public does not view all sex offenders the same. Policy makers are encouraged not to treat all sex offenders as a homogenous group because not only is this a misinformed approach (Harris & Hanson, 2004), it would also not represent public interest.

Overall, the results indicate that Canadians are in favor of a majority of RR and IC policies. These results reflect the practical and important desire to have various strategies that address sex offender management (Mears et al., 2008). Rather than continue to propose and pass primarily punitive IC policy, such as the Safe Streets and Communities Act and the Tougher Penalties act, the current research provides a further incentive to shift towards rehabilitative approaches to sex offender management, in an attempt to balance the response. Effective planning for adequate housing, employment and social support for sex offenders released back into the community can help to reduce recidivism (Willis & Grace, 2009). The current research program revealed that Canadians are supportive of policies that would assist offenders in finding appropriate housing and employment, as well as restorative justice programs that involve community member volunteers.

It appears that enactment of community based rehabilitative sex offender policies are well supported by Canadians. Given that the public is supportive of sex offender treatment both in and out of prison, and that research has shown that community based sex offender treatment has a larger effect on recidivism than treatment completed in prison (Kim et al., 2016), a focus on community treatment programs is warranted. Given the lack of impact of incarceration on recidivism (Nunes et al., 2007) as well as the incredibly high costs of keeping offenders incarcerated compared with community supervision, emphasis on and implementation of



community based treatment and management strategies for sex offenders is highly encouraged and would also be cost effective. Restorative justice programs, which are community based and reliant on volunteers such as COSAs, have also been shown to be cost saving (Elliot & Beech, 2011).

Adopting and encouraging the participation of members of the public in restorative justice approaches such as COSAs would be beneficial for reducing sexual offending through policy. The basis of the COSA model is the inclusion of offenders within a group of supportive community members. COSA models have been incorporated with other systems of offender management such as housing, in the state of Vermont, and have also been used to enhance community supervision, which has resulted in reduced rates of recidivism and related costs (Bumby et al., 2016). COSA models work because they leverage social capital in order to assist offenders in reintegrating successfully. They are effective because of the strong interconnectedness they foster, as well as the clear expectations and high levels of support made available to offenders upon release (Bumby et al., 2016). Given Canadian people's reluctance to engage with sex offenders in the community, as shown by their scores on the SDS scale, there is clearly more work to be in order to encourage more public engagement on this topic. If people have negative feelings and erroneous beliefs about sex offenders, they would likely be less willing to engage with these offenders.

Additional research that focuses on the public's willingness to execute these rehabilitative policies is also important. This research would be helpful as it would provide further understanding of whether these policies can be successfully executed in reality, and it may be able to identify what factors may get in the way of public willingness. Opening up public dialogue and presenting the public with accurate information regarding sexual offending behaviour, such as rates of recidivism, could help to dispel some of these myths, and possibly reduce negative attitudes (certainly negative beliefs). Thus, one way to encourage the public to actually implement these rehabilitative approaches and interact with former sex offenders in a meaningful way (which will help to reduce risk) is to further engage and educate them about the issue of sexual violence.

### **5.7.1 A Public Health Approach**

Researchers have suggested that is time for a paradigm shift in how society views and responds to the issue of sexual violence (Lobonov-Rostovsky & Harris, 2016). It has been

recommended that the next step in continuing to protect the public is a focus on prevention of sexual violence through the use of a public health strategy (McCartan, Kemshall, & Tabacknick, 2015). A public health approach would encourage framing the issue of sexual violence beyond solely a criminal justice problem, which is used as a reaction to offending behaviour, and would start tackling the issue from an upstream perspective.

McCartan and colleagues (2015) stated that all social concepts are in part socially constructed. Such terms and concepts as child sexual abuse for example, are generated from theories both implicit and explicit, which stem from a number of sources including: personal experiences and stereotypes (which were described as implicit) and, the media, professionals and social networks (which were described as explicit). These authors indicate that in order to change implicit theories of child sexual abuse for example, explicit theories within the social climate must be changed, and the way to do so is to engage the public in a common dialogue (McCartan et al., 2015). This broad public health approach would acknowledge social context and norms and provide information about the impact of policies and the cost of victimization as well as our responses as a society to sexual offending behaviour. Discussion and social networks and community involvement have been identified as important mediators for issue awareness, local political involvement and attitude strength (Sheufele, Shanahan, & Kim, 2002) and thus local community engagement may help to educate and encourage public participation on this issue. This comprehensive public health approach would assist in mobilizing additional strategies to deal with the issue including interventions both before and after harm has been done (McCartan et al., 2015).

It is recommended that policy makers and the Canadian government promote education and awareness of the issue of sexual violence, which would be considered a policy in its own right. Educating the public on significant legal reform such as rape legislation has been successful in raising public awareness in the past (Roberts et al., 1996) and still has potential. Bringing this issue to the attention of the entire public would be justified given that it impacts so many people, both directly and indirectly. In this approach, sex offenders are not the outcast group, but are included into the larger issue of sexual violence, which includes prevention, treatment, rehabilitation for offenders and support and advocacy for victims, as well as services for those related to both offenders and victims. By starting a conversation that includes everyone, one that is personally relevant to everyone, a clearer understanding of those who

offend sexually could be achieved. Through this understanding may come a more balanced, informed and effective approach to tackle the issue of sexual violence and sex offender management. Past research has found that persons who have had positive contact with persons previously convicted of sexual crimes, dehumanize this group less and have less negative attitudes towards them (Viki et al., 2012). Therefore, this would likely serve to improve and enhance community ties for former offenders, which are pivotal in successful reintegration of sex offenders (Bumby et al., 2016; Burchfield & Mingus, 2014; Fox, 2015).

### **5.8 Conclusion**

This study is the first large-scale investigation into Canadian attitudes towards sex offenders, sex offender treatment and sex offender policy endorsement and provides important insights into the public's views about how this group should be managed. Canadian attitudes towards sex offenders are not overly negative or extreme but generally more neutral, with the exception of feelings which are quite negative towards this population and especially towards child offenders. Despite these negative feelings, Canadians endorsed a diverse array of policies for the management of sex offenders, including both RR and IC policies. The differences in RR policy endorsement did not differ by type of sex offender, and in fact the majority of all RR policies presented were endorsed by Canadians for all three types of sex offenders. Canadians did differentiate among offender types in their support of particular IC policies and specifically they endorsed fewer of these policies for NCA offenders. This suggests that Canadians support RR policies despite how they feel towards particular types of offenders; furthermore they do differentiate in terms of punitive approaches for particular types of sex offenders. The findings from this research are also encouraging from the point of view of those interested in reducing offending, given that Canadians were not overly punitive towards this offender group and in fact support many RR approaches.

These results indicate that a more balanced approach to sex offender management would reflect Canadian public preference. The knowledge garnered from this program of research will help to bridge the gap between research evidence and practice. In order to effectively apply research regarding factors associated with sex offender recidivism to policy decisions, it is imperative to understand what the public, as stakeholders, view as important and useful approaches, and which strategies they would be willing to support or not support. It is hoped that information can then be used to inform policy makers and politicians. Results of this

research may have implications for future policy and reintegration strategies and may encourage collaboration between researchers, policy makers, and the public.

The media is a cost effective way to reach the public and expose people to important issues and is also an easy way for the public to keep informed and develop opinions and beliefs about different issues (Sheufele, et al., 2002). Researchers have found that media plays a key role in political involvement, issue awareness and attitude strength (Sheufele et al., 2002). Although, as previously discussed, it has predominately been utilized in an unhelpful manner and media portrayals of sex offenders and sexual violence have often been at odds with professional research advances (Soothill, 2010), the media has the potential to meaningfully and positively impact public awareness and attitudes about sexual violence, sex offenders, and offender reintegration and desistance. This may be possible only through collaborative and meaningful engagement between researchers, policy makers, the media and the public.

Notably, the findings garnered from this research program also point to the complexity in policy development. Firstly, sex offenders are a heterogeneous group of offenders and results show that even members of the public demonstrate levels of support for particular management strategies. Secondly, the public and public attitudes towards sex offenders are also complex and multifaceted, and as past research has shown, different demographic variables are relevant to attitudes towards sex offenders for different groups of people. Furthermore, the results show that different personal characteristics are significantly associated with policy endorsement for different types of offenders. These results indicate that coming to a consensus on what is best for everyone and what is supported by everyone is not an easy endeavor and warrants thoughtful discussion, engagement and collaboration.

Of course, as mentioned previously it is not only the will of the public that must be considered when creating and enacting diverse sex offender policies. This is especially so given that often beliefs and feelings towards sex offenders are negative and public reactions are often driven out of fear and retribution (Tewksbury et al., 2012). Policy makers must also consider the evidence, and are restricted by other relativities such as the length of their term, available funding and general feasibility. Importantly, public policy necessarily has to reflect to some degree, public need and interest, however it should also reflect the research evidence on what is most effective at meeting the desired goal, which is to protect the public. In this case however, when both public will and evidence align, it seems only reasonable as well as democratic and

responsible, to act and take advantage of this positive connection. Increased community engagement and adopting a public health approach to the issue of sexual violence is recommended and has promise in terms of making societies safer (Lobonov-Rostovksy & Harris, 2016).

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## Appendix A

### Demographic Information Items:

For each item, please choose the answer that best describes you personally. Please answer every question. All answers will remain anonymous

1. What Province/Territory do you live in?

- a. British Columbia
- b. Alberta
- c. Saskatchewan
- d. Manitoba
- e. Ontario
- f. Quebec
- g. New Brunswick
- h. Nova Scotia
- i. Newfoundland & Labrador
- j. Prince Edward Island
- k. Northwest Territories
- l. Yukon
- m. Nunavut

2. What best describes the size of the city/town you reside in?
- a. rural area (1000 or less residents)
  - b. small population area (1 000-29 999 residents)
  - c. medium population area (30 000-99 999 residents)
  - d. Large urban population centre (100 000 or greater residents)
3. What is your age? (in years) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Your gender: Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which best describes you:
- a. Caucasian/White/European descent
  - b. Black/African American/Afro-Caribbean
  - c. Aboriginal/Native American/Inuit/First nations
  - d. Asian/Asian Origin
  - e. Bi racial/Multi-racial
  - f. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your highest level of completed education?
- a. Less than grade 9
  - b. Grade 9 and some high school
  - c. High school graduate/equivalency
  - d. Some college/university
  - e. Bachelor's degree
  - f. Graduate/Medical degree
  - g. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your approximate annual household income:
- a. under \$19 999
  - b. \$20 000-29 999
  - c. \$30 000- 39 999
  - d. \$40 000- 49 999

- e. \$50 000 -59 999
- f. \$60 000- 69 999
- g. \$70 000- 79 999
- h. \$80 000- 89 999
- i. \$90 000-99 999
- j. \$100 000 and up

8. Do you have children? Y/N

9. What best describes your relationship status:

- a. Single
- b. Common law/married
- c. Separated
- d. Divorced
- e. Widowed

10. Please indicate your political orientation on the following line:

Liberal-----Conservative

**Please report your experience with sex offenders:**

- 11. Have you previously or do you currently deal with sex offenders in some form as part of your job. Y/N
- 12. Do you have an acquaintance/friend who is a sex offender. Y/N
- 13. Do you have an acquaintance/friend who is a victim of a sexual crime. Y/N
- 14. I have no direct experience with sex offenders or victims of sexual crimes. T/F

## Appendix B

### Survey Version Definitions and Instructions:

When you complete the following questions please consider the following definition of sex offender:

#### **Version 1:**

**Contact Sex Offender, Adult victim:** an offender who has been convicted of a contact sexual offence against a non-consenting adult (over the age of 18). Offences may include: sexual assault (rape), aggravated sexual assault.

#### **Version 2:**

**Contact Sex Offender, Child victim:** an adult offender who has been convicted of a contact sexual offence against a child (person under the age of 18). Offences may include: invitation to sexual touching, sexual assault, incest, sexual interference, sexual exploitation.

#### **Version 3:**

**Non-contact Sex Offender: Adult victim:** An offender who has been convicted of an offence that is sexual in nature that did not involve direct physical contact with the victim. For example: exhibitionism, obscene telephone calls, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, voyeuristic activity (trespassing by night).

## Appendix C

### Attitudes towards Treatment of Sex Offenders (ATTSO) Scale (Wnuk et al., 2006)

The statements listed below describe different attitudes toward the treatment of sex offenders in Canada. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions. You are asked to express your feelings about each statement by indicating whether you (5) Disagree strongly, (4) Disagree, (3) Undecided, (2) Agree, or (1) Agree strongly. Indicate your opinion by writing the number that best describes your personal attitude in the left-hand margin. Please answer every item.

#### Rating Scale

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I believe that sex offenders can be treated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Treatment programs for sex offenders are effective.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. People who want to work with sex offenders are crazy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Psychotherapy will not work with sex offenders.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Regardless of treatment, all sex offenders will eventually reoffend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Sex offenders can be helped using the proper techniques.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Treatment doesn't work, sex offenders should be incarcerated for life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. It is important that all sex offenders being released receive treatment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. We need to urge our politicians to make sex offender treatment mandatory.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. All sex offenders should go for treatment even if they don't want to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Sex offenders don't deserve another chance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Sex offenders don't need treatment since they chose to commit the crime(s).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Sex offenders should never be released.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Sex offenders should not be released back into the community.

#### Scoring:

Factor 1 Incapacitation: items 3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14 (none are reverse scored)

Factor 2 Treatment Ineffectiveness: items 1, 2, 4, and 6 (items 1, 2, and 6 are reverse scored)

Factor 3 Mandated Treatment: items 8, 9, 10 (none are reverse scored).



## Appendix D

Attitudes toward Sex Offenders and the Criminal Justice System Survey (ATSOCJS; Olver & Barlow, 2010)

~Please rate using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

- \_\_\_ 1. Prison sentences for sex offenders in Canada are too lenient
- \_\_\_ 2. Prison sentences for sex offenders in Canada are too severe
- \_\_\_ 3. Most sex offenders commit new sex crimes when they are released from prison
- \_\_\_ 4. Sex offenders cannot be successfully rehabilitated
- \_\_\_ 5. Sex offenders commit their crimes because they are “sick in the head”
- \_\_\_ 6. For the protection of the general public, sex offenders should never be released from jail
- \_\_\_ 7. Most sex offenders are caught for their crimes
- \_\_\_ 8. The majority of sex offenders commit their crimes without being detected
- \_\_\_ 9. If a sex offender completes treatment, he/she is less likely to re-offend
- \_\_\_ 10. Surgical castration is a suitable intervention for sex offenders
- \_\_\_ 11. Some sex offenders can be safely managed in the community
- \_\_\_ 12. The Canadian criminal justice system is effective in rehabilitating sex offenders and reducing future sexual offending
- \_\_\_ 13. I would never allow for a sex offender to live in my neighborhood, if I had any say in it
- \_\_\_ 14. People who commit sex crimes should have no basic human rights
- \_\_\_ 15. Our justice system is way too lenient in the way it deals with sex offenders
- \_\_\_ 16. Sex offenders cannot control their impulses and they cannot change
- \_\_\_ 17. Longer prison sentences are needed in order to reduce the number of sex crimes in society
- \_\_\_ 18. Providing intensive treatment and community supervision is what is needed in order to reduce the number of new crimes in society
- \_\_\_ 19. Sex offenders are people who should be given an opportunity to redeem themselves
- \_\_\_ 20. If treatment does work to reduce sexual re-offending, this would be a better alternative than simply imposing longer jail sentences
- \_\_\_ 21. Most sex offenders don’t really want to change their behavior
- 22. What percentage of sex offenders would you estimate commit new sex offenses after they are released from prison? (Please provide a number between 0 and 100%)
- 23. What percentage of sex offenders who complete psychological treatment would you estimate go on to sexually re-offend? (Please provide a number between 0 and 100%)
- 24. What is the average prison sentence length in Canada that you would estimate a sex offender receives? (Please provide an estimate in days, months, or years)
- 25. What, in your opinion, would be the appropriate amount of jail for an individual convicted of a sex offense? (Please provide a number in days, months, or years)

## Appendix E

### Social Distance Scale (SDS; Willis et al., 2013)

Please rate the following using the scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
most definitely not	definitely not	neutral?	definitely	most
definitely				

#### **Would you have a sex offender released from prison as:**

1. . . . your neighbor?
- 2.. . . your colleague?
3. ...your boss?
4. . . an acquaintance?
5. . . . a member in your church/sports club/community group?
6. . . . a close friend?
- 7.. . . a partner in marriage/civil union?
- 8.. . . a son-in-law?

#### **Would you . . . a released sex offender?**

- 9.. . . employ?
- 10....rent a house to?
11. . . . introduce to your social group?

## Appendix F

### Feeling Thermometer (FT)

1. Please rate your overall feelings towards sex offenders\*.

Very negative-----Very positive

\* For the 3 versions of the battery, a different definition will be included for this item.

## Appendix G

### Sex Offender Policy (SOP) Scale

This survey asks your opinion of particular policies related to sex offenders in Canada that you would be in favor of /oppose. Please note: some of these are actual policies used in Canada, others are policies used elsewhere and/or are potential policies not yet in use. Read carefully and answer all questions. All information is anonymous and confidential. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

<b>Strongly oppose</b>	<b>Somewhat oppose</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Somewhat in favor</b>	<b>Strongly in favor</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

<b>Please rate your personal level of support/opposition for the following sex offender related policies, using the scale above.</b>	
<p>1. Sex offenders should have to be registered with the National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR), for 10 years after they are released from prison.</p> <p>The National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR) is a database of personal information that includes the name of the offender, birthday, photo, address, residence, etc. The registry helps police prevent and investigate sexual crimes. Note: this registry is only available to police, and is not available to the public.</p>	
<p>2. Sex offenders should have to be registered with NSOR for life.</p> <p>The National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR) is a database of personal information that includes the name of the offender, birthday, photo, address, residence, etc. The registry helps police prevent and investigate sexual crimes. Note: this registry is only available to police, and is not available to the public.</p>	
<p>3. Information included on the NSOR should be made available to the public.</p> <p>The National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR) is a database of personal information that includes the name of the offender, birthday, photo, address, residence, etc. The registry helps police prevent and investigate sexual crimes.</p>	
<p>4. All sex offenders should have to serve time in prison for their crimes.</p>	
<p>5. Only high risk sex offenders should have to serve time in prison for their crimes.</p> <p>High risk sex offenders are those most likely to commit a new sexual crime based on expert/scientific assessment).</p>	
<p>6. All sexual crimes should have minimum mandatory sentences.</p> <p>Minimum mandatory sentences are prison terms preset by law, not negotiable in court.</p>	
<p>7. Only sexually violent crimes (those involving direct physical contact with a victim) should have minimum mandatory sentences.</p> <p>Minimum mandatory sentences are prison terms preset by law, not negotiable in court.</p>	

<p>8. All high risk sex offenders should be under an 810 peace bond after they have completed their sentence for a sexual crime.</p> <p>High risk sex offenders are those most likely to commit a new sexual crime based on expert/scientific assessment.</p> <p>An 810 peace bond is a court order that allows an offender to be in the community supervised under certain conditions, for up to 2 years.</p>	
<p>9. All high risk sex offenders should be made Long Term Offenders as part of their sentence.</p> <p>High risk sex offenders are those most likely to commit a new sexual crime based on expert/scientific assessment.</p> <p>Long term offenders receive a 10 year term of living under supervision in the community after they are released from prison.</p>	
<p>10. All high risk sex offenders should be sentenced as Dangerous Offenders.</p> <p>High risk sex offenders are those most likely to commit a new sexual crime based on expert/scientific assessment.</p> <p>Dangerous Offenders are offenders sentenced to an indefinite period of incarceration, with no specific or predetermined release date.</p>	
<p>11. Sex offenders with a high sex drive should have to take drug treatments to lower their sex drive when released from prison.</p>	
<p>*12. Child sex offenders (offenders who commit a sexual crime against a child) should be subject to residence restrictions, once released from prison.</p> <p>Residence restrictions are defined as: being unable to live or be within a certain distance from school and child friendly areas such as parks, community centres.</p>	
<p>Sex offenders on probation or parole should also have to wear GPS tracking devices.</p> <p>Offenders on probation/parole are serving their sentence supervised under conditions in the community.</p>	
<p>14. A sex offender-specific therapy program should be offered to sex offenders in prison.</p>	
<p>15. A sex offender-specific therapy program should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole.</p> <p>Offenders on probation/parole are serving their sentence supervised under conditions in the community.</p>	
<p>16. In order to keep up sex offenders' therapy gains from prison, the Criminal Justice System should offer therapy programs in the community for offenders who have finished their sentences.</p>	
<p>17. Therapy related to personal relationship skills should be offered to sex offenders in prison.</p>	
<p>18. Therapy related to personal relationship skills should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole.</p> <p>Offenders on probation/parole are serving their sentence supervised under conditions in the community.</p>	
<p>19. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders to find jobs once they return to the community, should be offered to sex offenders in prison.</p>	

20. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders to find jobs in the community, after they are released from prison, should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole. Offenders on probation/parole are serving their sentence supervised under conditions in the community.	
21. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders find stable housing once they return to the community, should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	
22. Criminal Justice programs to help sex offenders find stable housing should be offered to sex offenders on probation or parole. Offenders on probation/parole are serving their sentence supervised under conditions in the community.	
23. Halfway houses only for sex offenders, should be available in the community. Halfway houses are community based housing for offenders serving at least part of their sentence supervised under conditions in the community.	
24. Volunteer options (e.g. to work a position in the kitchen or library) should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	
25. Leisure/recreational options (e.g. ability to engage in sports/fitness, a book library) should be offered to sex offenders in prison.	
26. Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) should be available for interested high risk sex offenders across Canada. Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) are groups of volunteers who help high risk sex offenders re-enter the community and live crime free through regular meetings and support. High risk sex offenders are those most likely to commit a new sexual crime based on expert/scientific assessment).	
*27. Criminal Justice programs to treat persons who are sexually attracted to children and feel they may act on it, should be available in the community to prevent violence against children.	
28. There should be more Criminal Justice System support, beyond simple parole or probation resources, for sex offenders who request it, in the community.	

\* Items 12 and 27 are specific to contact sex offenders with child victims.

## Appendix H

### Study 1 SOP Scale Additional Instructions

As you complete this survey, please also consider your experience when reading and answering the questions and make note of which items or words/statements (if any) were more difficult to read or understand, and/or which were confusing. Please provide your feedback in the space provided after each individual item.

## Appendix I

### Consent Form (Study 1)

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “**Public Attitudes towards Sex Offenders and Sex Offender Policy.**” Please read this form carefully.

**Researcher(s):** Dr. Mark Olver, Associate Professor, 966-4743, [mark.olver@usask.ca](mailto:mark.olver@usask.ca) and Gabriela Corabian, clinical psychology graduate student, [gabriela.corabian@usask.ca](mailto:gabriela.corabian@usask.ca) Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan.

**Purpose and Procedure:** The purpose of the study is to examine public attitudes towards sex offenders and sex offender policy. The attitudes and opinions of the public are essential to the development of workable public policies regarding sex offender reintegration. The estimated time of your total involvement will be 25-30 minutes. You will receive one participant pool credit for your participation.

Your participation will consist of completing: a demographic questionnaire, several short questionnaires on attitudes towards sex offenders and sex offender treatment, and a survey about your support of different sex offender policies. You will also be asked to provide feedback on your experience completing the policy questionnaire. We are collecting demographic information for two reasons: 1) published research typically requires a description of the study sample so that we know whether we can generalize the findings; and 2) we plan to use the demographic information to test hypotheses.

All data collected will be averaged and your individual responses will not be traceable to you. Your completion of these questionnaires will be completely **anonymous and confidential**. The findings will be presented at conferences, research team meetings, published in academic journals, and possibly other forms of media (e.g., newspaper).

**Potential Benefits:** A possible benefit is that you may gain a better understanding about your attitudes about sex offenders and what types of public policies you would support.

**Potential Risks:** It is possible that you may experience some emotional stress from the content of some questionnaire items. You have the right to respond only to those questions you are comfortable with. If necessary, you may contact Student Counselling Services on campus (966-4920) for additional support. It is also possible that you will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this research.

**Storage of Data:** Raw data will be stored securely on the Fluid Survey server and backed up confidentially by the primary researcher. The data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years after completion of the study.

**Right to Withdraw:** As you have registered for this study through the Department of Psychology’s Participant Pool, you will be awarded research credit for your participation. Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from your involvement. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with the research



team. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort.

**Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to contact the researchers named at the top of the form. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on December 15, 2014. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

**Follow-Up:** If you are interested in receiving a summary of the study findings at a future date, please provide your email address (your e-mail address will be kept separate from your responses, which will remain anonymous and will be used only for the purposes of providing you with a summary of study findings): \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent to Participate:** I have read and understood the description provided. I consent to participate in the research project by proceeding to the next screen and completing the survey. I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

Thank you very much in advance for your participation!

Gabriela Corabian, M.Ed.  
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Dr. Mark E. Olver  
Associate Professor  
Department of Psychology  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A5  
mark.olver@usask.ca

## Appendix J

### Consent Form (Study 2)

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “**Public Attitudes towards Sex Offenders and Sex Offender Policy.**” Please read this form carefully.

**Researcher(s):** Dr. Mark Olver, Associate Professor, 966-4743, [mark.olver@usask.ca](mailto:mark.olver@usask.ca) and Gabriela Corabian, clinical psychology graduate student, [gabriela.corabian@usask.ca](mailto:gabriela.corabian@usask.ca) Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan.

**Purpose and Procedure:** The purpose of the study is to examine public attitudes towards sex offenders and sex offender policy. The attitudes and opinions of the public are essential to the development of workable public policies regarding sex offender reintegration. The estimated time of your total involvement will be approximately **25-30 minutes**.

Your participation will consist of completing: a demographic questionnaire, several short questionnaires on attitudes towards sex offenders and sex offender treatment, and a survey about your support of different sex offender policies. We are collecting demographic information for two reasons: 1) published research typically requires a description of the study sample so that we know whether we can generalize the findings; and 2) we plan to use the demographic information to test hypotheses.

All data collected will be averaged and your individual responses will not be traceable to you. Your completion of these questionnaires will be completely **anonymous and confidential**. The findings will be presented at conferences, research team meetings, published in academic journals, and possibly other forms of media (e.g., newspaper).

**Potential Benefits:** A possible benefit is that you may gain a better understanding about your attitudes about sex offenders and what types of public policies you would support.

**Potential Risks:** It is possible that you may experience some emotional stress from the content of some questionnaire items. You have the right to respond only to those questions you are comfortable with. If necessary, you may view the Canadian Mental Health Association website [[www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)] to be connected with additional support in your local community. It is also possible that you will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this research.

**Storage of Data:** Raw data will be stored securely on the Fluid Survey server and backed up confidentially by the primary researcher. The data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years after completion of the study.

**Right to Withdraw:** You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time.

**Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to contact the researchers named at the top of the form. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on December

15, 2014. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

**Follow-Up:** If you are interested in receiving a summary of the study findings at a future date, please provide your email address (your e-mail address will be kept separate from your responses, which will remain anonymous and will be used only for the purposes of providing you with a summary of study findings): \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent to Participate:** I have read and understood the description provided. I consent to participate in the research project by proceeding to the next screen and completing the survey. I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

Thank you very much in advance for your participation!

Gabriela Corabian, M.Ed.  
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## Appendix K

### Debriefing Form

#### **Public Attitudes towards Sex Offenders and Sex Offender Policy (study #14-434)**

The study you just participated in is a survey of public attitudes towards sex offenders, sex offender treatment, and sex offender policy. Sexual violence has devastating negative consequences for victims and their families but research has shown that programs aimed at risk factors can reduce sexual re-offending. Factors that have been found by researchers to be associated with increased re-offending (such as lack of social supports, antisocial lifestyles, and an inability to find stable housing and employment), are influenced by community attitudes and public policies. The attitudes of the public are essential to the development of workable public policies related to sex offenders. Without public support, even evidence-based sex offender reintegration policy would be futile because the majority of sex offender policy requires public support, buy-in, and direct involvement to be successful.

Although you answered questions about only one type of sex offender, we asked other participants about their attitudes towards two other types of sex offenders: contact offender with child victim [e.g. child molester], contact offender with adult victim [e.g. rapist], or non-contact offender [e.g. exhibitionist]. This research has not been done yet in Canada on such a large scale. We are interested in exploring attitudes of Canadians and in particular their support of particular sex offender policies, and to identify if particular attitudes are predictive of particular policy endorsement. We are also interested in seeing if attitudes and policy endorsement vary based on particular demographic variables (e.g. gender, political affiliation, education) or type of sex offender (contact offender with child victim[e.g. child molester], contact offender with adult victim [e.g. rapist], or non-contact offender [e.g. exhibitionist]).

If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to contact the researchers.

Thank you again for your participation, your responses are very important to us!

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Appendix L

**Table A.1**

*Study 2 Between Group Differences among Demographic Variables*

Variable		<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Age	Between Groups	2	2.79	.06
	Within Groups	1004		
Sex	Between Groups	2	.76	.47
	Within Groups	1000		
Ethnicity	Between Groups	2	2.05	.13
	Within Groups	992		
Education	Between Groups	2	.51	.60
	Within Groups	967		
Annual Household Income	Between Groups	2	.90	.41
	Within Groups	863		
Relationship Status	Between Groups	2	.84	.43
	Within Groups	996		
Children	Between Groups	2	.59	.55
	Within Groups	1001		
Political Orientation	Between Groups	2	1.02	.36
	Within Groups	902		
SO Job	Between Groups	2	.83	.44
	Within Groups	1005		
	Total	1007		
SO Friend/Acquaintance	Between Groups	2	.19	.83
	Within Groups	1001		
Victim Friend/Acquaintance	Between Groups	2	1.37	.25
	Within Groups	1001		

*Note.* SO = sex offender.

# Appendix M

**Table A.2**

*Study 2 Pearson r Correlations among Demographic Variables-Overall Sample*

Correlations													
	City Size	Age	Sex	Ethnic.	Educ.	Annual Income	Rel. status	Children	Pol Orien.	Work SO	Know SO	Know Victim	No Exp.
City Size	1.00	-.17**	-.04	.09**	.24**	.05	-.09**	.20**	-.10**	.11**	.05	.02	-.02
<i>n</i>		1007	1003	995	970	866	999	1004	905	1008	1004	1004	1005
Age		1.00	.14**	-.15**	-.18**	-.14**	.26**	-.31**	.15**	.01	-.00	.12**	-.10**
<i>n</i>			1002	994	969	866	998	1003	904	1007	1003	1003	1004
Sex			1.00	-.01	-.07*	-.15**	.03	-.08**	-.08*	-.01	-.10**	-.11**	.09**
<i>n</i>				992	965	863	994	999	901	1003	999	999	1000
Ethnic.				1.00	.10**	-.07*	-.13**	.06	-.04	-.02	.02	-.03	.01
<i>n</i>					959	861	989	991	898	995	991	991	992
Educ.					1.00	.25**	.00	.12**	-.27**	-.04	-.01	-.05	.02
<i>n</i>						834	962	966	872	970	966	966	967
Annual Income						1.00	.30**	-.15**	.01	-.04	-.01	.06	-.03
<i>n</i>							861	864	783	866	862	862	864
Rel. status							1.00	-.52**	.08*	-.04	-.00	.03	-.04
<i>n</i>								996	898	999	995	995	996
Children								1.00	-.14**	.02	.03	-.04	.02
<i>n</i>									901	1004	1000	1000	1001

Pol. Orien.		1.00	.05	.03	.14**	-.13**
<i>n</i>			905	902	901	903
Work SO			1.00	.04	.16**	-.30**
<i>n</i>				1004	1004	1005
Know SO				1.00	.24**	-.26**
<i>n</i>					1000	1001
Know					1.00	-.67**
victim	<i>n</i>					1001
No Exp.						1.00

*Notes.* SO = sex offender.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).